

Multiple Forms of Redemption in Kabbalah and Hasidism

MOSHE IDEL

INTRODUCTION

THE HISTORY OF THE speculative literary corpora in medieval Judaism reveals a series of borrowings of different modes of thought from the Muslim (and to a certain extent also Christian) sources. Jews absorbed philosophy and the sciences either by resorting to translations of originally ancient Greek and Hellenistic treatises, or by their interpretation and digestion in mainly Muslim sources. This process added new topics to the agenda of earlier forms of Judaism and dramatically restructured a long series of topics in the biblical-rabbinic forms of Judaism. One such restructuring is apparent in the range of new understandings of messianism. The various types of thought that were adopted by some Jewish elites triggered a strong diversification of the older and more popular versions of messianism; this came about through interpretations that were based on speculative assumptions absent from or marginal in earlier forms of Judaism. This is one of the reasons for the emergence of *multiple* forms of redemption and messianism, generated by adding new layers of understanding messianism upon older ones, thereby enriching the Jewish constellation of messianic ideas.

In some cases, elite figures regarded apocalyptic messianism, with its national and corporeal achievements, as a rather low form of redemption in comparison to the intellectual one. So, for example, we read in an anonymous commentary on Maimonides' thirteen principles:

We and all those who follow the path of truth attain [now], the coming of the redeemer, at any time, and we do not hope for his coming as the vulgar do, since the stupid people are fond of the coming of the redeemer in order to rule over their enemies and become rich from the

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plunder of their enemies, and to ride their horses and asses, and to lie with their beautiful women, and to consume and drink things that are delightful for the body, and various delicious things, and become crazy because of the vanities of this world [like] false governing, authority, rank, and grandeur, and other similar vanities, which are necessity of the two souls, the appetitive and vital souls. And those things are necessary for every sage, and would their body be sustained without them they would never desire them . . . it is not worthwhile to believe that God blessed be he, will send us the king messiah except in order to fulfill the things that lack in matter of knowledge, sagacity and wisdom, not for anything else, namely this is the true intention, and from it all the other goods will be derived together with the retribution of the rational soul and the retribution of the two [other] souls, as necessary.¹

The shift from a political-social type of redemption, in the vein of popular apocalyptic messianism, to a spiritual one that may be attained in the present is obvious. The messianic attainments are related to the impact of the “divine influx” on the messiah, described also as “a divine man.”² This influx is evidently a matter of an intellectual process. For this author, liberation from Egypt was intended solely for the reception of the Torah, which is predicated upon making the Jews wise—itsself a type of noetic approach.³ Not that the material aspects are totally rejected. As the anonymous author writes in the continuation, material gains are derived from spiritual attainments.⁴ Thus, we have two forms of messianism: the spiritual-intellectual and the material, the latter depending on the former. This subordination of the popular, national messianism to the spiritual one is,

1. MS Oxford-Bodleiana Catalogue Neubauer, 2360, fol. 11a–b. See Appendix A.1. Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhot Yesode ha-Torah 7:4: מתנבא בכל עת. This anonymous piece has been edited by Esty Eisenmann in *Kovetz al Ya'ad* 19 (2006): 183–96, our text being on p. 189. In this MS also is found, among other manuscripts, in a codex together with *Sefer sitre Torah*, one of Abraham Abulafia's commentaries on the thirty-six secrets found in Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*, and it may be that the ecstatic Kabbalist influenced his formulations. This text, has been probably composed in the Byzantine Empire since it has been quoted there for the first time by R. Elnathan ben Moshe Qalqish, *Sefer even sapir*, MS Paris, National Library 728, fol. 154b. Compare to Maimonides' *Commentary on the Mishnah*, San 10.1 and his *Mishneh Torah*, Hilekhot Melakhim 12.4.

2. MS Oxford-Bodleiana 2360, fol. 11b: יהיה איש אלוהי שלם קרוב למדרגת משה (and Eisenmann, *ibid.*, 190).

3. *Ibid.*: כבר ידעת כי נאולת מצרים לא היתה תכלית הכונה בה כי אם לחתכים את ישראל' והראיה בנתינת התורה והוא שלמדם משה רב' ע"ה חכמה שלא ידענה במצרים

4. *Ibid.*, fol. 11a. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, III:11. Cf. *idem*, *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhot Melakhim 12.5.

indubitably, a more extreme formulation of the Maimonidean axiology.⁵ However, the assumption that the exodus from Egypt was intended for the purpose of receiving the Torah tells us another story, according to which corporeal redemption is necessary for intellectual redemption. Significant for this move is the mentioning of the “wise soul” as the first recipient of the redemption, and only subsequently of the two lower souls, which strive to more material forms of retribution (related to the vulgar understanding of the meaning of redemption). The introduction of the philosophical distinctions between different souls, and the priority of the higher, intellectual soul, are related to the elitist tone. Though not denying the material aspects of redemption in a categorical manner, they are envisioned as the result of intellectual redemption.

This initial diversification, a relatively simple one, underwent many changes, and it can be bewildering to keep track of.⁶ There was indeed a significant fragmentation of the more homogenous popular apocalyptic concepts by the new medieval Jewish elites. However, I would say that this bewilderment can be avoided by a close reading and analysis of the extant messianic documents. In some of my writings, I have insisted upon the need to acknowledge the diversity of models found in messianic thought. In this essay, I hope to advance this work one step further. My assumption is that messianism, like many other generic terms, should be used in scholarly discourse in a very cautious manner, since in the traditional sources it is an umbrella term for a variety of different theories, and without distinguishing carefully between them on the basis of detailed textual analyses, we often are left with empty rhetoric that bears little relation to the original texts.

We can discern in the rather limited discussions of these matters some trends, which I designate as models.⁷ By proposing to analyze the term

5. See Aviezer Ravitsky, “‘To the Utmost of Human Capacity’: Maimonides on the Days of the Messiah,” in *Perspectives on Maimonides: Philosophical and Historical Studies*, ed. J. L. Kraemer (Oxford, 1991), 221–56.

6. See R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, “Jewish Messianism in Comparative Perspective,” in *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity Presented to David Flusser*, ed. I. Gruenwald, S. Shaked, G. G. Stroumsa (Tübingen, 1992), 1–13.

7. See Moshe Idel, “Types of Redemptive Activities in the Middle Ages,” in *Messianism and Eschatology: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Z. Baras (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1984), 253–79; and my *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven, Conn., 1998). See already the distinctions between different types of messianism and redemption in Abulafia in my Ph. D. thesis, “R. Abraham Abulafia’s Writings and Doctrine” (Hebrew; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1976), 395–401. An issue that I cannot follow up here is the relationship between different forms of redemption and the different views on time emerging in the same writings. See, meanwhile, Idel,

“messianism” in more than one manner, I do not mean to suggest that the variety connotes unrelated discourses, but rather that some centers of gravity can be identified in the constellation of ideas I call messianism. Though eschatological and apocalyptic themes are evident in other forms of Jewish mysticism like the Hekhalot literature and Ashkenazi thought,⁸ I will be preoccupied here mainly with kabbalistic and Hasidic contributions to the constellation of ideas that make up Jewish messianism.

Let me clarify an issue that has been discussed only rarely in scholarship: the relationship between messianic ideas and redemptive ones. In principle, they can be separated, such that redemption be understood, properly in my opinion, as not always involving a messianic type of redemption. If “messianic” implies a more general form of redemption, beyond the inner redemption of the individual—though nevertheless related to the individual redemption—the latter becomes part of a messianic constellation of ideas. This means that though the two forms of redemption can exist separately, they can also overlap. Indeed, I will dedicate some of the discussions to this overlapping below. The fragmentation that I will now describe created more modest discussions, which subsequently were put in some form of relationship with each other, or concatenated in more significant manners in wider forms of discussions. The process of fragmentation has opened up the possibility of conjugating these diverse messianic and redemptive themes into larger conceptual narratives.

Let me enumerate the major new forms of messianism and redemption that may be discerned since the thirteenth century in kabbalistic writings:

[A] Two of the most influential modes of thinking in the Middle Ages, the Neo-Aristotelian and the Neoplatonic, have contributed to new modes of understanding messianism and redemption, or to what may be described as interiorized (individual) messianism and redemption. Views dealing with individual-spiritual forms of redemption have been adopted

“Some Concepts of Time and History in Kabbalah,” in *Jewish History and Jewish Memory, Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi*, ed. E. Carlebach, J. M. Efron, D. N. Myers (Hanover, N.H., 1998), 153–88; and idem, “Sabbath: On Concepts of Time in Jewish Mysticism,” in *Sabbath: Idea, History, Reality*, ed. G. Blidstein (Beer Sheva, 2004), 57–93. For a helpful distinction among four types of exiles and redemptions in Hasidism, see M. Buber, *Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, ed. and trans. M. Friedman (New York, 1966), 203–5.

8. See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1974), 72, and Israel Yuval, “Jewish Messianic Expectations toward 1240 and Christian Reactions,” in *Toward the Millennium: Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco*, ed. P. Schaefer and M. Cohen (Leiden, 1998), 105–21.

and adapted in both Jewish philosophy and some forms of Kabbalah, and we have seen one such example above. We may speak of noetic redemption by the actualization of the intellect, in the Neo-Aristotelian trend,⁹ or of redemption by the cleaving of the soul to the supernal soul or God, in the Neoplatonic vein.¹⁰ The Neo-Aristotelian version of inner redemption has been expounded by a figure who considered himself to be a messiah, Abraham Abulafia.¹¹ The inner redemption can be described also as operating with *microchronoi*, small units of time, measured in tens of years.

[B] The astrological views which entered Judaism in a more significant manner from the twelfth century, especially in Abraham bar Hiyya, contributed to what may be described as cosmic forms of redemption, dealing with cosmic cycles.¹² Those views were adopted by Kabbalists in their versions of *shemitah* and *yovel*, first in the school of Nahmanides, R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi,¹³ and then in many other kabbalistic literatures. In many cases, calculations related to the coming of the messiah had astrological bases. An impact of this approach to messianism can be seen in the case of the most famous messiah, Sabbatai Tzevi.¹⁴ In this view of redemption, destruction of the existing order is essential for the beginning of a new age. Central to the kabbalistic notion of order that is related to astrology is the understanding that the cosmic processes are

9. Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 77–79.

10. See Idel, “Types of Redemption Activities,” 254–63; idem, “‘The Time of the End’: Apocalypticism and Its Spiritualization in Abraham Abulafia’s Eschatology,” in *Apocalyptic Time*, ed. A. Baumgarten (Leiden, 2000), 157–58, and *Messianic Mystics*, 51–53.

11. See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 58–100.

12. See Haviva Pedaya, *Nahmanides, Cyclical Time and Holy Text* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 2003), 213–411; Colette Sirat, “Juda b. Salomon Ha-Kohen – philosophe, astronome et peut-être Kabbaliste de la première moitié du XIII^e siècle,” *Italia* 1.2 (1979): 48, n. 21; and M. Idel, “The Jubilee in Jewish Mysticism,” in *Fins de Siècle – End of Ages*, ed. J. Kaplan (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2005), 67–98.

13. On this important Kabbalist, see Gershom Scholem, *Studies in Kabbalah* 1, ed. J. ben Shlomo and M. Idel (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 1998), 112–36; and Georges Vajda, “Un chapitre de l’histoire du conflit entre la Kabbale et la philosophie: La polémique anti-intellectualiste de Joseph b. Shalom Ashkenazi,” *AHDLMA* 23 (1956): 45–143; Moshe Hallamish’s preface to his edition of *A Kabbalistic Commentary of Rabbi Yoseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi on Genesis Rabbah* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1984), 11–27; and Haviva Pedaya, “Sabbath, Sabbatai, and the Diminution of Moon: The Holy Conjunction, Sign and Image” (Hebrew), in *Myth in Judaism*, ed. H. Pedaya, = *Eshel Beer-Sheva* 4 (1996): 150–53.

14. See Idel, “Saturn and Sabbatai Tzevi: A New Approach to Sabbateanism,” in *Toward the Millennium*, 173–202.

inevitable and part of a constant universal rhythm that does not depend on human activity. Such a deterministic approach minimizes the importance of rituals or of mystical techniques. This mode of thinking operates with what I propose to call *macrochronoi*, cycles of time measured by millennia. Though it is less concerned with the *mesochronoi*—namely, units of time related to national events, measured by hundreds of years—the coming of the messiah is nevertheless mentioned, at least by two sixteenth-century Kabbalists resorting to this way of thought.¹⁵

[C] Another understanding regards redemption as conditioned on overcoming some forms of cosmic evil. Those kabbalistic views were, in some cases, influenced by Manichaean worldviews; they assume that redemption will come in this world at the end of the cosmic battle between good and evil, which are now mixed in the supernal world. The need to separate good from evil is a restoration of the situation prior to mixing.¹⁶ This view assumes a double spiritual architecture in which there is a divine spiritual power, as well as a negative or demonic power. Closely related to it is the assumption that in order to open the door for the coming of the messiah, the representatives of evil should be enchained, a view found in the kabbalistic circles of *Sefer ha-meshiv* and in the legend of R. Joseph della Reina.¹⁷ Here certain apocalyptic elements become more prominent than in any other body of kabbalistic literature before or after.

[D] The theory of metempsychosis, which entered Kabbalah in the *Book of Babir* and in different forms in Nahmanides and his school from as yet unidentified sources, contributed to a new vision of the redemption of the individual soul, not by means of noetic activity or cleaving to the higher worlds but by religious deeds in the form of the commandments.¹⁸ It should be emphasized that metempsychosis is not only an issue of personal redemption but is applied sometimes also to the very soul of the messiah, as the acronym *ADaM* (Adam, David, Messiah) shows.¹⁹ It seems that already in the *Babir* there is some hint that the soul of the

15. See R. Meir ibn Gabbai's *Avodat ha-kodesh*, (Lemberg, 1857), 2:32, fol. 64b; and *Sefer ginat betan*, chap. 52, MS Oxford-Bodleiana 1578, fol. 63b; and Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 159–60.

16. See R. Meir ibn Gabbai's *Avodat ha-kodesh*, 2:38, discussed in Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 47–48 (to be addressed below).

17. Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 126–32.

18. Idel, "The Secret of Impregnation as Metempsychosis in Kabbalah," in *Verwandlungen, Archaeologie der literarischen Communication IX*, ed. A. and J. Assmann, (Munich, 2006), 349–68 and the bibliography adduced in the footnotes.

19. On this acronym, see Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 189–90.

messiah is related to metempsychosis.²⁰ At least in one case, the theory of the transmigration of the soul of the messiah through generations (in order to defend the world from the powers of evil) has been articulated by a messianic figure, Shlomo Molkho.²¹

[E] By following some earlier traditions, however, many Kabbalists developed a theory that assumes the existence of a linkage between the national redemption and the redemption of the divine power that participates in the vicissitudes of the Jewish people, the Shekhinah.²² This approach is found in the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah, where the unification of the feminine divine presence with the male divine powers was considered to be part of the process of redemption of both the divine realm and the world. In this category I propose to include also the views, found in Safedian Kabbalah, both in its Cordoverian form dealing with the rescue of the sparks of the Shekhinah,²³ or in Lurianic sources dealing with the sparks of *Adam Kadmon*,²⁴ by means of performing the commandments, an activity known as *tikun*, or repair.

[F] Last but not least, there is one case in Kabbalah of what may be designated as political redemption, which means that the ascent and decline of empires may generate conditions for the national redemption of the Jewish nation in the form of renewing a Jewish state. This view is found in a text of Abraham Abulafia and reverberates in R. Joseph ibn Caspi and, under his influence, in Spinoza and in modern Zionism.²⁵

[G] These six basically medieval developments in Judaism were articulated already by the end of the thirteenth century. They emerged only

20. See *The Book of Bahir*, ed. D. Abrams (Los Angeles, 1994), 209, par. 126.

21. See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 150.

22. See idem, *Kabbalah and Eros* (New Haven, Conn., 2005), 104–52. The exile of the Shekhinah is a well-known theme found in kabbalistic literature, long before the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. See, e.g., the various discussions in R. Menahem Recanati's *Commentary on the Torah*, and in *Sefer ha-kanah* and *Sefer ha-peliy'ah*.

23. See below n. 144.

24. On this issue see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 39–44.

25. See Shlomo Pines, *Between Jewish Thought and the Thought of the Nations* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1977), 277–305. On this issue, see also Y. H. Yerushalmi, "Spinoza on the Existence of the Jewish People," *Proceedings of the Israeli Academy of Science* 6.10 (1983); and also Ravitsky, "'To the Utmost of Human Capacity,'" 225, n. 7; and Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 544. See also S. M. Stern, *Aristotle on the World State* (Columbia, S.C., 1968); and Sara O. Heller-Willensky, "Messianism, Eschatology and Utopia in the Philosophical-Mystical Trend of Kabbalah of the 13th Century," in *Messianism and Eschatology*, ed. Z. Baras (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1984), 221–38; and Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 79–82.

in elite Jewish literatures, the product of what I call a secondary elite, which subscribed in one way or another also to the more traditional and widespread concepts of apocalyptic redemption. These concepts were connected to the intervention of the divine power in the form of the messiah, as found in more popular forms of literatures before the emergence of the six other modes.²⁶ Each of them related in one way or another to the popular forms of apocalyptic messianic belief, either by reinterpreting them or by creating syntheses. Thus, different concepts of time sometimes inhabit the same system, together with the *mesochronos* of apocalyptic redemption. In a way, Kabbalists, as part of the medieval Jewish elite, operated with a variety of new forms of time, as the framework for their speculations and experiences.

However, unlike classically defined apocalyptic time, by adhering to some new forms of order, the concepts of redemption (and in many cases messianic redemption) were understood more in developmental or evolutionary terms than as a rupture. The emergence of the new forms of order facilitated the reinterpretation of redemption in terms of inner processes or cosmic ones. The messiah as an extraneous factor is conceived as less important a factor than it had been in other models, since the burden of improvement of the world, or of the cosmic objective processes, is now put on the new elite figures. The inner redemption of figures, as understood by the new elites, at times becomes the prelude of a more general redemption.²⁷ This more systemic understanding of redemption and messianism is the reason why a description of Jewish messianism as presented by Scholem, with its emphasis on the catastrophic, is exaggerated. He wrote that “Jewish Messianism in its origins and by its nature—this cannot be sufficiently emphasized—is a theory of catastrophe. This theory stresses the revolutionary, cataclysmic element in the transition from every historical present to the Messianic future . . . The elements of the catastrophic and the vision of the doom are present in peculiar fashion in

26. See the comprehensive collection of Jewish apocalyptic texts done by Yehudah Even Shemuel, ed., *Midreshe ge'ulab: Pirke ha-apocalypsoab ha-yehudit* (Jerusalem, 1954); the analyses of some of those treatises by Avraham Grossman, “Jerusalem in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” in *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Muslim Period, 638–1099*, ed. J. Prawer and H. Ben-Shammai (New York, 1996), 295–310; and Robert Bonfil, “The Vision of Daniel as a Historical and Literary Document,” in *Yitzhak F. Baer Memorial Volume, 1888–1980*, ed. H. Beinart, S. Ettinger, and M. Stern (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1980), 111–47. For English translations of some of the apocalyptic treatises, see Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (Detroit, 1979). See also Isaiah Tishby, *Messianism in the Time of the Expulsion from Spain and Portugal* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1985).

27. This is one of the main theses of my *Messianic Mystics*.

the Messianic vision.”²⁸ Scholem’s attraction to catastrophic manifestations²⁹ has contributed to a self-awareness of his own project as dedicated essentially to the apocalyptic idea³⁰—one that does not allow the due space to the various interpretations of messianism and redemption I have enumerated above. In fact, in these thirteenth-century kabbalistic literatures, the messiah in the traditional role as a central figure in an apocalyptic scenario plays only a minor role. Instead there are many discussions dealing with redemption, whose different senses are connected to the *perfecti*, Kabbalists, and repentants. They play more constructive roles than the destructive ones of the apocalyptic messiah.

Immersed in the process of adopting and then building new comprehensive speculative systems that promote stability, the new Jewish elite of the Middle Ages domesticated or “chained” the apocalyptic messiah within their respective types of order.³¹ The role of the single popular messiah, who alone is responsible for the upheaval imagined in the context of the national redemption, has been considerably attenuated; in its

28. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1972), 7–8. See also his resort to the term “catastrophe” also in his *Major Trends*, 245–47, 287. For the centrality of the catastrophic factor in Jewish messianism, see also R. J. Zvi Werblowsky, “Jewish Messianism in History,” in *Essential Essays on Messianic Movements in Jewish History*, ed. M. Saperstein (New York, 1992), 39. For surveys of Scholem’s views on messianism, see Joseph Dan, “Gershom Scholem and Jewish Messianism,” in *Gershom Scholem, The Man and the Work*, ed. P. Mendes-Flohr (Albany, N.Y., 1994), 73–85; David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 71–93; and my *Old Worlds, New Mirrors: On Jewish Mysticism and Twentieth-Century Thought* (Philadelphia, 2010), 146–52.

29. See Harold Bloom, “Scholem: Unhistorical or Jewish Gnosticism,” in *Gershom Scholem*, ed. H. Bloom (New York, 1987), 217; and Baruch Kurzweil, *Struggling for the Values of Judaism* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1969), 213–40. See also Michael Lowy, *Redemption et utopie: Le judaïsme libertaire en Europe centrale* (Paris, 1988), 82.

30. “If I have demonstrated something [at all] in my writings I have shown that ancient apocalypse has accepted some forms and replaced them, but it is one under its metamorphoses after the destruction of the second temple, and one is it in its first metamorphoses beforehand.” *‘Od Davar – Explications and Implications* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 1989), 240. See also Scholem’s concluding remarks in *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, ed. S. Re’em (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1982), 256. On the continuity of Jewish apocalypticism, see his *Sabbatai Ševi: The Mystical Messiah*, trans. R. J. Z. Werblowsky (Princeton, N.J., 1973), 9.

31. See also M. Idel, “On Some Forms of Order in Kabbalah,” *Daat* 50–52 (2003): xxxi–lviii; idem, *Messianic Mystics*, 9–11; and my study “The Chained Messiah: The Taming of the Apocalyptic Complex in Jewish Mystical Eschatology,” forthcoming in *The Apocalyptic Complex: Origins, Histories, Permanences*, ed. N. Al-Baghdadi, D. Marno, M. Riedl (Budapest, 2011).

place, we have the possibility of other redemptive factors like the supernal messiah or each individual.³² In fact, the perfection of the individual is redemptive, on both the personal level and the more cosmic one. For example, by cleaving to the supernal power that rules the world, which is in some cases the supernal or general soul, the soul of the perfect man can influence events in this world, a view shared by Avicenna and Abraham ibn Ezra and some Kabbalists.³³

All the seven modes [A–G] listed above constitute what we may call the constellation of messianic ideas. They are messianic since the term “messiah” is mentioned in them, and in some cases messiahs formulated them. Given my belief that we should investigate the views of medieval and premodern authors—and not our preconceptions—as to the exclusive identification of the messiah as a powerful human warrior, the medieval descriptions should count much more than the impressionistic views of one scholar or another as to what is indeed “true” messianism or not. Our understanding of the kabbalistic and Hasidic messianism should be dictated by the results of textual analysis, not by modern presumptions. The same obtains for concepts of exile and redemption.

Needless to say, those different modes of dealing with redemption occur only very rarely in a pure form in distinct literatures. In fact, already in the thirteenth century we may discern examples of more than one of them coming together in the same body of kabbalistic literature. Such an example is found in the writings of Abraham Abulafia. His thought reflects what I will describe in more detail later as both variety and complexity. He adopted the political, noetic, and to a certain extent also the astrological modes of thinking, and he interpreted traditional messianism accordingly.³⁴ In the book of the Zohar, we find theosophical-theurgical as well as of apocalyptic themes.³⁵ However, this vast and important literature, as well as other contemporaneous kabbalistic writings like those of R. Moses de Leon and R. Joseph Gikatilla, rejected, implicitly or explicitly, the theory of cosmic cycles.

On the other hand, the astrological mode describing cosmic cycles has

32. I do not include in my discussions here the distinction between the Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David, since different as they are in pre-kabbalistic treatises, they are part of the very same narrative. Neither am I concerned here with the different redemptions in the past from the subjugation of various empires since they are all political forms of redemption.

33. See Idel, “Types of Redemptive Activities,” 273–74.

34. Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 58–100.

35. See Yehuda Liebes, “The Messiah of the Zohar,” in *The Messianic Idea in Israel* (Hebrew), 87–234; and Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 121–24.

been associated with the theory of metempsychosis, in many cases in Nahmanides' school, in Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, and, later on, in *Sefer ha-temunah*.³⁶ With the emergence of the "mosaic" type of kabbalistic composition (that is, the writing of lengthy kabbalistic texts based on quotes, recognized or paraphrased) from the end of the thirteenth century,³⁷ redemptive concepts found in different schools are brought together in the same work. This is especially obvious in the writings of the kabbalist R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, who drew from both the zoharic literature and the thought of R. Joseph Ashkenazi, as well as in the work of R. Isaac of Acre, who was close to ecstatic Kabbalah and the trends found in R. Moshe ben Nahman's circle.

A variety of modes of messianic and redemptive modes of thinking mentioned above are combined in a highly eclectic, late fourteenth-century Byzantine volume *Sefer ha-Peli'ah*, where astrological, noetic, metempsychotic, and theosophical-theurgical concepts are found together.³⁸ Thus, a variety of eclectic combinations, and sometimes syntheses of redemptive and messianic ideas, can be discerned in Kabbalah before the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula. As these texts come to the attention of Kabbalists after the expulsion, as well as the cultural encounters that accompanied the expulsion,³⁹ a synthetic approach to messianism and redemption increased, as we will see below. However, this does not mean that all Kabbalists subscribed to all approaches: R. Isaac Luria, for example, rejects cosmic types of redemption related to astral processes, or the absence of the noetic type of redemption, in favor of a theosophical-theurgical interpretation of redemption.

This inventory of diverse trends and syntheses displays a rich reservoir

36. It should be mentioned that the affinities between some Ismailia views regarding cosmic cycles and metempsychosis and *Sefer ha-temunah*, pointed out by Pines, hold also for R. Joseph Ashkenazi, who preceded the *Book of Temunah* and in my opinion also influenced its thought. See Shlomo Pines, "Shi'ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's Kuzari," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. 2 (1980): 249–51. See also Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (Albany, N.Y., 1989), 163, n. 132.

37. See M. Idel, *R. Menahem Recanati, the Kabbalist* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1998), 1:24–32.

38. On the various sources of this eclectic book, see Michal Kushnir-Oron, "The *Sefer Ha-Peli'ah* and the *Sefer Ha-Kanah*: Their Kabbalistic Principles, Social and Religious Criticism and Literary Composition" (Hebrew; Ph. D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1980).

39. See M. Idel, "Encounters between Spanish and Italian Kabbalists in the Generation of the Expulsion," in *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World*, ed. B. R. Gampel (New York, 1997), 189–222.

of ideas about redemption that emerged already during the first century of historical Kabbalah; it demands another type of history. Complex understandings of redemption and messianism as Jewish ideas that evolve in diverse and often intersecting ways through the centuries should be advanced to add nuance to (or even displace) regnant scholarly models—such as what has been often called the “messianic idea,”⁴⁰ a relatively stable notion which was conceived of as undergoing some changes from time to time, or the historicist assumption that “Kabbalah” became messianic only after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.⁴¹ Ignoring both the messianic ideas of Abulafia and the Zohar is hardly a recipe for a penetrating understanding of how this lore evolved. A less linear picture of Kabbalah will involve a less linear and essentialist understanding of the “messianic idea”; instead, language of crosscurrents, syntheses, tensions, and controversies will become a vital part of the intellectual apparatus of Kabbalah scholarship. Thus, variety, or polychromatism, and complexity constitute basic assumptions that will allow us to account better for the developments regarding the constellation of messianic ideas. In this constellation there is plenty of room for both the destructive and constructive views of redemption, apocalyptic events, cosmic cataclysms, and inner redemptive experiences.

While the ebbs and flows of messianic thought certainly depend to a certain extent on historical events, I will avoid, for now, the question whether there is an affinity between historical circumstances and the privileged status of messianic ideas in a certain author, center, or period of time. Approaches to kabbalistic messianism have rarely been historically oriented. So, for example, the emergence of messianic concerns in the mid-thirteenth century, in the kabbalistic writings of R. Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen, has been divorced from its historical background (i.e., a period in which rumors of the Mongols as the lost tribes abounded—and with which Western Europe and the Jews were acquainted).⁴² We should, however, first analyze the sources, the specific concatenations of the ideas, the relative role of the messianic ideas in a certain corpus, and then endeavor to arrive at an explanation without regard to external factors. Priority should be given therefore first to the problem of sources of a certain type of speculation, since terminology can help determine

40. For references to scholarship resorting to the concept of “messianic idea” in the singular, see Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 17, 241, 334, n. 74.

41. Scholem, *Major Trends*, 244–51.

42. See Joseph Dan, “The Emergence of Messianic Mythology in 13th-Century Kabbalah in Spain,” in *Occident and Orient: A Tribute to the Memory of A. Schreiber*, ed. R. Dàn (Budapest/Leiden, 1988), 57–68.

whether two phenomena separated by a long period of time and emerging in different circumstances are related to each other, beyond the more general eidetic affinities. I would like to put a special emphasis on the term “concatenation.” What I mean by this is that one needs determine whether different messianic and redemptive ideas are properly connected to each other, and not artificially superimposed.⁴³ How exactly such a messianic or redemptive constellation of ideas acts or does not act in society or history in a certain period is another issue, to be determined by other types of approaches, principally historical and sociological.

A COMPLEXITY OF REDEMPTION IN THREE MAJOR KABBALISTS

In this section, I would like to consider three main Kabbalists who dealt with different but complex types of messianism and redemption in the same passages. Thus, my concern is not so much with the existence of different forms of messianism in the thought of a particular Kabbalist, though that will indeed be discussed below, but more with discussions about different forms of messianism, presumably intended to preclude cognitive dissonance. Kabbalists wrote in different countries, in different historical circumstances, and in different times. I proceed on the assumption that the themes to be addressed below are unrelated to one other. Nevertheless, they reflect different forms of complexity, of messianism and redemption, which were assumed already in the second century of the existence of Kabbalah to be historical phenomena. Their emergence relatively soon after the surfacing of Kabbalah as a literary phenomenon points to the diversification of kabbalistic currents quite soon.⁴⁴

[A] Let me start with a passage written by the remarkable messianic figure R. Abraham Abulafia⁴⁵ in a text written in the early 1280s in Italy or Sicily:

The term *masbiyah* is equivocal, [designating] three [different] matters;
(a) first and foremost the true Agent Intellect is called the messiah . . .

43. Compare to the metaphor of the layer-cake by Werblowsky, “Jewish Messianism in Comparative Perspective,” 12.

44. See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 108–9.

45. On Abulafia’s messianism, see Abraham Berger, “The Messianic Self-Consciousness of Abraham Abulafia – A Tentative Evaluation,” in *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought Presented in Honor of Salo Wittmayer Baron*, ed. J. L. Blau et al. (New York, 1959), 55–61; Harvey J. Hames, *Like Angels on Jacob’s Ladder: Abraham Abulafia, the Franciscans, and Joachimism* (Albany, N.Y., 2008); Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 58–100; idem, “The Time of the End,” 155–86; and idem “*Torah Ha’as-hab*—Messiah and the New Torah in Jewish Mysticism and Modern Scholarship,” *Kabbalah* 21 (2010): 68–76.

(b) and the man who will bring us out of the exile from under the rule of the nations due to the power that is emanated upon him from the Agent Intellect—he will [also] be called messiah. (c) And the material human Intellect is called messiah, which is the hylic⁴⁶ intellect that is the redeemer and the savior and has influence over the soul and all elevated spiritual powers. It can save the soul from the rule of the material kings and their people and their powers, the lowly bodily desires. It is a commandment and an obligation to reveal this matter to every wise man of the wise ones of Israel in order that he may be saved because there are many things that oppose the opinions of the multitude of the rabbis, even more so differ from the views of the vulgus.⁴⁷

The elitist nature of the passage is obvious, as we see from the discussion at the end. Abulafia understood that he was proposing a new version of messianism, which should be hidden from the vulgar. It can be assumed here that Abulafia has in mind more apocalyptic and less intellectual understandings of the task of the messiah. The term “messiah” stands here for three different types of redeemers: the cosmic, namely, the Agent Intellect in the way it has been defined by the Arabic and Jewish philosophy, an entity that rules over the sublunar world, the intellectual cosmokrator; the national, or the human redeemer in history; and the personal, the individual intellect that redeems the lower psychic powers in man. All three are explicitly connected to the concept of intellection, while the latter two depend upon the contact with the Agent Intellect. However, the third category is dependent upon the second, which means that someone may redeem himself without the need of a corporeal messiah necessary for general salvation. Thus, there is no synchronicity between the two forms of redemption in Abulafia’s passage. In a way, we have here an adumbration of the assumption that was explicated in East European Hasidism regarding the aspect of the messiah found in every person.

46. Namely, the material or potential intellect. It is possible that we have here a vestige of Averroes’ theory of the intellect.

47. See *Commentary on Sefer ha-melits*, MS Rome-Angelica 38, fol. 9a. See Appendix A.2.

On this passage, see Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, trans. J. Chipman (Albany, N.Y., 1987), 127, 140; idem, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, 66; idem, *Messianic Mystics*, 65–66; idem, “Types of Redemptive Activities,” 262; and idem, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* (London, 2008), 308. More on the reign of the intellect over the other spiritual powers described in messianic terms, see again in the *Commentary on Sefer ha-melits*, fol. 5b–6a, discussed in Idel, “Types of Redemptive Activities,” 259–60.

In this passage, the external and more common concept of salvation found in the form of an individual messiah of the Jewish nation is not exclusive of the spiritual concept of a messiah found within human spiritual faculties and cosmic intellectual entity. They may coexist, as in the above passage of the ecstatic Kabbalist, who believed that he was a messiah himself. However, special attention should be given to the third meaning of "messiah." It means that in every man there is a potential messiah, as long as the potential intellect is found in him. This means that while the second type of messiah is an actualized intellect, who also acts in the external world, the third one is a messiah who rules over one's own inner powers alone. The former, however, cannot appear unless the latter exists. On the other hand, the third messiah does not depend on the second messiah, since it consists in an inner noetic activity. It should be mentioned that Abulafia plays upon the concept of bringing out: the intellect is actualized, namely, brought out from potentiality to actuality, and so the Jews are brought out from among the nations. In both cases, the Agent Intellect is the actualizing power; in a way, he is the metaphysical messiah of the two other, lower messiahs. While the first and the last messiahs are not related to acts concerning rabbinic Judaism, the second one is qualified by saying that he is saving "us" (meaning the Jews), and thus reflects a more particularistic approach.

It is essential to note that the first of these three meanings of the messiah is introduced by the word "true," implying that the meaning of Agent Intellect, from which the other two, also related to acts of intellection, are derived, is of the utmost importance. This understanding ties the scope of meanings related to the concept of messiah to the Neo-Aristotelian chain of ten separate cosmic intellects. As a redemptive act, the disclosure of this intellectual dimension of the messiah implies that it saves the believers from an erroneous type of belief in the nature of the messiah. There is a hierarchy here: the category (c) is the lowest, consisting in a human being whose intellect should be connected to the Agent Intellect in order to become the messiah as defined in category (b), and in turn, as the result of a unitive noetic experience,⁴⁸ can become a still higher one. Thus (c) stands for the person acting in history as a national messiah, while (b) stands for the human actualized intellect, the inner messiah who saves the human lower capacities, while (a) stands for the pure intellectual entity, the atemporal spiritual messiah, who is the ultimate source of the two lower messiahs. It is the "true" one since it is active all the time on the intellectual level but also has an impact on the sublunar processes.

48. See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, 1–32.

I read this to say that the hierarchy starts with the actual and continuous messiah, then it turns to the person who actualized his intellectual/messianic potency in a certain moment, and then the lowest is the potential messiah. There are, therefore, only two distinct forms of redemption mentioned here: first in time is the intellectual/individual one, related to the cleaving to the Agent Intellect, and then, by dint of this intellectual redemption, the national messiah may emerge. Thus, individual redemption necessarily precedes, as mentioned above, the national one.

The secrecy related to the intellectual messiah is found also in another instance, in another book belonging, like *Sefer ha-melits*, to the genre of prophetic writings. In *Sefer ha-'ot*, written between 1285 and 1288, the author discusses the fifth figure in a messianic vision he had, as follows:

The fifth is my messiah, he will rule after the days of the four kingdoms.⁴⁹ This is the interpretation that is revealed to all. But the hidden interpretation will be understood by someone who understands by his own wisdom.⁵⁰

Abulafia refers to the Hebrew term *ḥamishi*, the fifth, that is a pun on *meshihi*, both words sharing the same consonants. This messiah will appear in history, in a certain period of time, after the four kingdoms mentioned in Daniel 8.22; this was the solution given to the complex vision described in that book.⁵¹ However, Abulafia hints at another interpretation, a hidden one. I conjecture that this has to do with the fact that the intellect that rules over the five elements in man, or the four temperaments, in a manner reminiscent of the way in which the hylic intellect qua messiah was described as ruling over the lower human faculties. This internalized understanding of redemption also occurs later on, as we read in a commentary on the Pentateuch he wrote in 1289:

The issues of sacrifices and of the exile and of redemption and of the inheritance of the land are connected [to each other] and they are derived, necessarily, from each other. The very name of the sacrifice

49. See Genesis 14.9, where four kings are mentioned, and immediately afterward Abraham is waging a war against them. I assume that there is a hint at Abraham Abulafia as the fifth and the Messiah.

50. "'Sefer Ha-Ot': Apokalypse des Pseudo-Propheten und Pseudo-Messias Abraham Abulafia," in *Jubelschrift zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag des Prof. Dr. H. Graetz* (Breslau, 1887), 84–85.

51. For an analysis of some aspects of this vision, see my "The Chained Messiah."

points to its meaning, which is the bringing of the divine powers to the human powers,⁵² and from this (combination) the exile of the bodies and the redemption of the souls are derived. And whoever's soul has been saved by the Lord, as was the case of Abraham, the entire world is his, even more so if God binds to him a power from His powers, according to the secret of the [letter] *H* which has been given from His name to his name. And this is a sign.⁵³

The distinction between souls and bodies is central for understanding the nature of exile and redemption: following many Neoplatonic treatments in the Middle Ages, the soul was conceived of as being in exile within the body, and its redemption consists in escaping the body. However, here the assumption is that redemption is achieved by the divine descent and, thus, connection to the soul. My assumption is that it is not a Neoplatonic scheme that is applied here but a Neo-Aristotelian one, which operates with the view that the Agent Intellect is radiating “downward” and the intelligibles emanating from it are informing or enriching the potential human intellect. Interestingly enough, exile, when attributed to the body, is conceived of as a positive state. Redemption and exile may coexist into the same person at the same time. In fact, we may assume that redemption is created by the exile and does not obliterate it. This view has something to do with the widespread Neoplatonic vision which assumes that the soul is found in this world in exile or prison. Thus, when redemption is an inner state, so is exile. Moreover, the last passage reveals tension between the redemption of the soul that generates the exile of the body or exile that is preparing the redemption of the soul. The antithetic formulation is quite obvious.

As seen above in the citation from *Maṣteḥ ba-ḥokhmah*, the experience of redemption and exile is exemplified by the addition of a letter to the consonants of Abram, which generates the name Abraham. Is this a mere exegetical exercise and attempt to interpret the biblical episode according to a Neo-Aristotelian scheme? No doubt such an interpretation can be

52. On the question of Abulafia's interpretation of the term *korban* as bringing the lower capacities closer to the supernal intellectual ones, on the basis of the etymology *le-bakeriv* = *le-karev*, see M. Idel, “On the Meanings of the Term Qabbalah: Between the Prophetic Kabbalah and the Kabbalah of Sefirot in the 13th century” (Hebrew), *Peamim* 93 (2003): 42–45; and compare to Elliot R. Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia, Hermeneutics, Theosophy, and Theurgy* (Los Angeles, 2000), 121–23.

53. *Maṣteḥ ba-ḥokhmah*, ed. Amnon Gross, (Jerusalem, 2001), 71–72. See Appendix A.3.

offered. However, is this all? No. Abulafia's first name was Abraham, and he considered himself to be the messiah, and he wrote the above passage a year before the date in which he hoped the redemption would come. Thus, when describing the transformation of the biblical Abraham, he hinted at his own experience, aspiration, and conviction. I assume that for him these rarified spiritual concepts such as the exile of the body are more pressing and relevant than any of the events that would be conceived of as historical. In fact, in an important passage, Abulafia insists that one ought to cultivate the possibility of attaining of the experience of prophecy, which is tantamount to that of mystical experience—that is, a conspicuous event—despite external circumstances. He does not recognize any hindrance to such an experience. External circumstances, like a weak physical constitution (*mezeg ḥaluṣh*) the lack of food, clothing, and shelter, prison, or what he called servitude, '*avedut*, which is tantamount to exile (*ba-nikra' galut*), are not negated; they represent facts of life. It is only their importance that is drastically minimized. For him, the urgency of the spiritual experience transcends corporeal need, and no one is exempted from pursuing the redemptive experience.⁵⁴ Let me address the second question: are such experiences understood as spiritual redemption? Is exile and its overcoming restricted to the inner life of a certain individual, or are they radiating also in his external activity? The answer is quite obvious: Abulafia attempted to meet the Pope and did everything he could to effect such a meeting which indubitably had a messianic aim, including preaching his version of Kabbalah to Christians.⁵⁵ Thus, though intellectually Abulafia elaborated upon the noetic mode as a key for understanding his messianism, he put it in service for political activity.

[B] Let me turn to another example of complexity, this time ritualistic, found in a book written early in the fourteenth century in Castile. This book displays some acute messianic concerns, and its author might have adopted some form of messianic self-understanding, as pointed out by scholars.⁵⁶ He too resorts to views about two or three messiahs and three

54. *Haye ba-nefesh*, MS Munchen 405, fols. 63b–64b. See also *ibid.*, fol. 1b, and Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, 29 n. 110.

55. See Moshe Idel, "Abraham Abulafia and the Pope: The Meaning and the Metamorphosis of an Abortive Attempt" (Hebrew), *AJS Review* 7/8 (1982/1983): 1–17.

56. See Amos Goldreich, "Inquiries in the Self-Image of the Author of *Tiqunei Zohar*," in *Massu'ot, Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb*, ed. M. Oron and A. Goldreich (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1994), 459–96, esp. 460–77; Isaiah Tishby, *Messianism in the Time of the*

redeemers, which have been treated incisively recently.⁵⁷ He assumed that by his composition of the last part of the *Zohar*, namely, its completion, he would hasten redemption.⁵⁸ A distinction between three types of amending is found in the later layer of the zoharic literature, the *Ra'ya Mehemna'*, which had an impact on some passages to be dealt with below in detail:

How did one amend what has been blemished on high?⁵⁹ By means of *teshuvab*: the *teshuvab* amends all,⁶⁰ amends on high, amends on low, and amends himself,⁶¹ amends the entire world . . . after he perfected himself and repented, [then] he amended all the worlds . . . “At the end of time,”⁶² why is it mentioned here? In order to include⁶³ *Knesset Yisrael*, which is in exile, and is found together with them in their vicissitudes, and she never leaves them, and this is the reason why the Holy One, blessed be He, wants Israel to repent so that he will improve their plight in this world and in the next one, despite the fact that the judgment rules over the world. There is nothing that withstands repentance . . . Repentance is superior when one is ready to sacrifice his soul for its sake, and when the soul is taken away during [the state of] repen-

Expulsion from Spain and Portugal (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1985), 91; and Yehuda Liebes, “The *Zohar* and the *Tiqqunim*: From Renaissance to Revolution,” in *Ḥidushe Zohar*, ed. R. Meroz = *Te'udab* 21/22, (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 2007): 251–301.

57. See Goldreich, “Inquiries in the Self-Image of the Author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*,” 467–77.

58. *Ibid.*, 485.

59. “On high” means here the sefirotic structure.

60. The *Zohar* is resorting many times to the phrase *tikuna' de-kula'*, the perfection or amendment of all. See, e.g., vol. 2, fol. 222a. In some cases this phrase points to the theurgical perfection induced within the divine system.

61. Precisely this phrase, *atekina' garmeb*, occurs in the *Zohar*, vol. 1, fol. 71a, in connection to David, and on 1. fol. 106a, in connection to Abraham, and in more general terms in vol. 2, fol. 106a, a passage that parallels from some point of view the later discussion in *Ra'ya mehemna'* (*RM*), translated here.

62. This phrase, the source of the concept of eschatology, is interpreted here and in other theosophical statements as pointing to the hypostatical status of the last *sefirab*, the end of the supernal system of divine powers, *Knesset Yisrael*. In Hebrew time is conveyed by the term *Yamim*, namely, days, which stand for the *sefirot* higher than the last one.

63. Compare to *Zohar* vol. 1, fols. 58a, 60a, and *Tikune Zohar*, printed in *Zohar* vol. 1, fol. 26a, where the Shekhinah is comprised—*kalyl*—with the supernal Israel.

tance, then everything is amended, on high and on low, and he is amended and the entire world.⁶⁴

The passage has clear redemptive overtones, as the terms “exile” and the “end of time” are mentioned explicitly. We may interpret the three categories of amending achieved by the act of repentance: the theosophical one, the amending of this world, and the self-amending. What was once the crucial event, the destruction of the existing (dis) order in order to reinstall the ancient order, has been replaced by the assumption that the world can be improved or repaired by the effort of the nonextraordinary individual. Salvation is predicated less on initial destruction of the historical order in the present as a necessary step for redemption, and more on the assumption that improvements can be produced by the elite religious figure. In this context, the concept of *tikun*, which appears as a verb several times in the above passage, achieved some form of restorative valence.

There is some form of causality that links the three types of amending: first comes the individual perfection, understood as self-amending, namely, repentance, and only then the other two forms of amending will take place. We may assume that the supernal amending, in which the Shekhinah is involved, is the cause of the lower, presumably national, amending. Indeed, the priority of the individual amending is obvious also in other instances in the zoharic literature.⁶⁵ It is important to notice the centrality of the perfection, which is an individual achievement, as the clue to all the other developments.⁶⁶ The national repentance and the national amending are juxtaposed to the individual perfection and amending. They are not conceived of as exclusive values, but rather as complementary ones.

The resort to the term *teshuvah*, which means both return and repentance, is of special interest to our discussion. The assumption is that by the return of the soul to its source, as a result of repentance, all the effects mentioned may take place. This return is a matter of reaching the source of things: either of the supernal world, probably the seven lower *sefirot*, or of the lower worlds. When such a place has been reached, it is possible to control, and thus to amend, the entities depending on this source, in a manner reminiscent of Avicenna and ibn Ezra. This resort to Neoplatonic theories of cleaving and magic is combined with a theosophy, namely, a

64. *RM*, *Zohar* 3, fol. 122ab.

65. See *RM*, *Zohar* 3, fol. 122b.

66. See again in another statement found *ibid.*, fol. 122a.

structure that is more complex and flexible than the philosophical theologies mentioned above. Moreover, the above passage combines the ascent of the source with a ritual approach, dealing with the superiority of the readiness to sacrifice as endowed with a special type of effect. Thus, we have a combination of Neoplatonism, theosophy, and ritualism—a fine example of complexity of the redemptive events.

What is absent in the above discussion is the role of the messiah, which has been replaced by the repentant. It is probable that the messianic role was “filled” by the self-perception of the anonymous author himself as the messiah.⁶⁷ Moreover, according to a hypothesis of Yehuda Liebes, it is possible to discern in the writings of the anonymous Kabbalist a feeling that he was a sinner in some early stage of his career.⁶⁸ The above passage about repentance may corroborate this hypothesis, as it combines the apotheosis of repentance with several sorts of amending, which have messianic overtones. It should be pointed out that unlike passages of Abulafia found in texts which were not accessible to many Kabbalists, the *Ra'ya Mehemna'*—which had been barely known to Kabbalists before the sixteenth century—was canonized as part of the “ancient” writings of Kabbalah; quotations from the *Tikune Zohar* were essential for the perception of the imminence of messianic times, if the book of the Zohar was to be studied.

Let me mention a discussion of the same anonymous Kabbalist where it is claimed that the third *sefirah* qua *teshuvah*, is conceived of as the redeemer of the Shekhinah.⁶⁹

[C] Let me turn now to another major kabbalistic model, which developed later on, this time in a different center of Jewish culture, the Byzantine Empire. In a passage found in a mid-fourteenth-century anonymous book, titled *Sefer ha-temunah*, we see a main representative of the deterministic mode.⁷⁰ This rather enigmatic triple commentary on the Hebrew alphabet reflects a combination of theosophical Kabbalah, with the concept of metempsychosis and with detailed speculations on cosmic cycles, in a manner reminiscent of the Kabbalah of R. Joseph ben Shalom Ash-

67. See above, n. 62.

68. “The Zohar and the Tiqqunim.”

69. *Tikune Zohar*, ed. Reuven Margoliot (Jerusalem, 1978), no. 50, fol. 22b.

70. Ed. Lemberg, 1892. On this book, see Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, trans. A. Arkush, ed. R. Z. J. Werblowsky (Philadelphia, 1987), 460–74. On the problems related to the dating of this book, see 460–61 and n. 233; M. Idel, “The Kabbalah in the Byzantine Region: First Inquiries” (Hebrew), *Kabbalah* 18 (2008): 208–14.

kenazi.⁷¹ Though probably written in the Byzantine Empire, where Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalah was well known, the anonymous author rejected the noetic and the political approaches. Nevertheless, the distinction between different forms of redemption, of bodies and souls, recurs in this book:

"The Son of David will not come until the souls will be exhausted from the Body"⁷² and then the supernal and lower redemptions will be united in the supernal light . . . because everything will return to the first redeemer, who has safely redeemed everything, and "he who has been sold will be redeemed, and he will be free at the Jubilee"⁷³ which are the days of the "Supernal Messiah."⁷⁴

Essential for the understanding of this passage and the approach of this book in general is the assumption of a double redemption: supernal and lower.⁷⁵ This redemption has here a clear messianic overtone as the mentioning of the messiah shows. The supernal messiah is related to the third *sefirah*, *Binah*, as his connection to the Jubilee shows. Earlier in the same treatise we learn that

in that Sabbath⁷⁶ the bodies as well as the souls will rest because the souls will be exhausted in the supernal body⁷⁷ and fill a body where the mother and the sons will be gathered [together], and then will come

71. Idel, "The Kabbalah in the Byzantine Region," 212–14; and Pedaya, "Sabbath, Sabbatai, and the Diminution of Moon," 148–49.

72. bYev 62a. This enigmatic statement has been discussed numerous times in Kabbalah, since the book of *Bahir*, especially in ibn Gabbai's *Sefer 'avodat ha-kodesh*, to whose views I will turn immediately below.

73. Lev 25.24.

74. *Sefer ha-temunah*, fol. 44b; and Pedaya, "Sabbath, Sabbatai, and the Diminution of Moon," 148–49; see also Idel, "The Jubilee in Jewish Mysticism," 85–87, for some kabbalistic antecedents to the view of the messiah as related to *Binah*.

75. Compare already the view of R. Joseph Gikatilla on two redemptions, higher and lower, in his book *Sha'are tsedek*, adduced and discussed in Idel, "Types of Redemptive Activities," 265, 269.

76. Namely, in that of the cosmic Jubilee, namely, in the millennium that follows the forty-nine millennia, when all the seven lower *sefirot*, designated here as sons, will return to the place of the mother, namely, *Binah*.

77. See bYev 62a.

the redemption of he who has been sold, and at the Jubilee he will be freed, that is in the days⁷⁸ of the supernal messiah.⁷⁹

The concept of the “supernal messiah,”⁸⁰ mentioned here in the context of the Jubilee and salvation, is not the corporeal messiah, which will occur in history, but a symbol of a spiritual redemption, which will occur primarily within the sefirotic world. Redemption in *Sefer ha-temunah* means not so much liberation from historical, political, or religious impediments as it means the escape of the souls from their corporeal bondage. This means their ascent to the third *sefirah* and, according to the reading I propose, to the nature of the second body mentioned in the last quote—that is, the ascent of the souls, and of the seven lower *sefirot* and of the *sefirah* of *Binah*, to the second *sefirah*, *Hokhmah*.⁸¹ This seems the reason why the messiah as a person is not mentioned in this book.

According to another discussion in this text, there exists a series of exiles and redemptions that starts with the bodies, the souls, the poets,⁸² the spheres, the angels, and the stars as one category. Redemption is portrayed as the absorption of these entities into their initial matrix, which means the return to their source.⁸³ In the same context, the rule of the *sefirah* of judgment is described as accomplished at the end of six millennia. The principle of the redemption is the return of the last created level of being first, and this is the reason why bodily redemption will be the first step in this process. From this point of view, *Sefer ha-temunah* reflects an attitude quite different from that of Abraham Abulafia's, and

78. *Yeme ha-mashiyah ha-Elyon*. The term “days” does not mean the regular periods of time but refers here to millennia, God's day being a thousand years.

79. *Sefer ha-temunah*, fol. 29b. The last sentence is identical to what is written in one of the treatises belonging to the circle of *Sefer ha-temunah*, the *Commentary on the Passover Haggadah* printed spuriously, under the name of R. Moshe de Leon, in Menachem Kasher, *Haggadah Shelemah*, ed. S. Ashkenazi (Jerusalem, 1967), 122, 130–32.

80. The phrase “supernal messiah” recurs also *Sefer ha-temunah*, fol. 29b, 44b. Whether or not his expression has something to do with Abulafia's first type of messiah, the Agent Intellect, is a matter that cannot be dealt with here.

81. Compare the *Commentary on the Passover Haggadah*, 131. This vision of the Jubilee as the adherence of the *Binah* to *Hokhmah* is found also in R. Moshe Cordovero's *Sefer Pardes Rimmonim*, Gate XXIII, chap. 10, part 2, fol. 20b. See also Bracha Sack, *The Qabbalah of R. Moshe Cordovero* (Hebrew; Beer Sheva, 1995), 267, n. 2.

82. *Meshorerim*. See fol. 42a, where this term stands for some form of angels.

83. *Sefer ha-temunah*, fols. 57b–58a.

closer to one aspect of the anonymous commentary on the Thirteen Principles that was mentioned above.

Redemption of the bodies will start, according to this book (ca.1344 or 1349),⁸⁴ some time after the book was written, while the redemption of the souls will start either in 1445, or, according to another kind of calculation, in 1526 or 1531. The earlier date may constitute the terminus *ante quem* for the composition of *Sefer ha-temunah*, a detail that has not been addressed in scholarship. These redemptions will be accompanied by global conflagrations, especially wars between empires.⁸⁵ Especially interesting is the assumption that this process will involve also a diminution in the number of creatures, a view found already in a book of R. Isaac of Acre.⁸⁶

For this discussion, it is important to highlight the multiplicity of exiles and redemptions that do not however clearly include a national redemption. Indeed the biblical expression *goy ve-Elohav*, namely, the nation and its God, occurs in this book several times in the context of redemption but this is just an implied assumption that a national redemption will take place.⁸⁷ The cosmic processes of absorption are by far the most important eschatological events and the national redemption is scarcely hinted at. Thus, though resorting to the term “redemption,” it does not mean an improvement of the situation here below, but on the contrary: an absorption which constitutes in fact a destruction of the entire theosophical, celestial, and mundane structures by their ascent on high and absorption within the *sefirah* of *Binah*.

A comparison between the views concerning messianism and redemption of the three Kabbalists we have seen clearly demonstrates that the categories are diverse and complex. What is essential for understanding those views is the concatenation of the various modes of thinking. This becomes more and more complex with time. Crucial for all the three Kab-

84. I reached these figures by interpreting a phrase found in *Sefer ha-temunah*, fols. 57b–58a, which says that the redemption of bodies will start at the date when the name *Ha-'Elohim* will be subtracted from *Har*, namely 205 [har]-91 [ha-'Elohim] = 104 + 1240 + 1344. Alternatively, if we decode *Har* as 5200, and not 205, the date will be 200–91 = 109 + 1240 = 1349. For messianic calculations in this book, see Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel from the First through the Seventeenth Centuries* (Gloucester, Mass., 1978), 93–94. On the basis of these calculations we may assume that the book was written sometime between 1330 and 1340.

85. *Sefer ha-Temunah*, fols. 57b–58a.

86. Idel, “The Jubilee in Jewish Mysticism,” 94.

87. Cf. 2 Sam 7.23. See *Sefer ha-temunah*, fols. 39a, 42b, 56b, 59a, 67a.

balists is the assumption of a metaphysical or a hypostatic messiah: in Abulafia, it is the Agent Intellect, in *Sefer ha-temunah*, it is the “supernal messiah” as related to the *sefirah* of *Binah*, and this is also the case, though more implicitly, in the later zoharic layer, where the third *sefirah* is described as the redeemer of the last, feminine *sefirah*. In fact the list of Kabbalists who identify the third *sefirah* with messianic and redemptive functions is much longer.⁸⁸ This means that whatever will be the activity of the historical messiah in the lower world, the higher, transpersonal messiah remains in its metaphysical world, though he continues to inform the activity of the lower messiah. In any case, those discussions and their broader contexts in the books which have been quoted in this section, as well as the much more messianic reading of the Zohar by Yehuda Liebes,⁸⁹ gravitate against the assumption of Scholem that “older Kabbalah” had neutralized messianism.⁹⁰ If we adopt a less essentialist approach, we may speak about the diversification—and thus the enrichment—of the messianic constellation of ideas. Also, the interest of postexpulsion Kabbalah in messianism should be checked first against its multiple backgrounds in earlier kabbalistic sources, as will be evident below.

R. MEIR IBN GABBAI'S THREEFOLD EXILE AND REDEMPTION

I will continue to exemplify both the issue of complexity of the redemptive ideas and their variety, as found in a writing of one major Kabbalist, R. Meir ibn Gabbai.⁹¹ My aim here is to illustrate the coexistence of more than one approach to redemption in a single kabbalistic book, *Sefer 'avodat ha-kodesh*, a classic book written in the Ottoman Empire after the expulsion from Spain. This treatise, which had a huge impact, allows us to point to possible sources in early forms of Kabbalah. Ibn Gabbai represents a strong ritualistic form of activism, namely, the assumption that

88. See additional cases discussed in Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 187–97.

89. See above, n. 35.

90. See his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 244–45. My approach is that messianism should be understood by analyzing discussions where the term “messiah” is mentioned, without determining what is “true” or not. Such a discussion will never assume the neutralization of messianism but the marginalization of apocalypticism.

91. On this Kabbalist, see Roland Goetschel, *R. Meir Ibn Gabbai: Le discours de la Kabbale espagnole* (Leuven, 1981), 452–81. Though the title of the monograph is correct in general, the contribution of the Byzantine Kabbalah to ibn Gabbai's thought should also be mentioned.

the coming of the messiah depends on the performance of the rituals of repentance. Commenting on a zoharic passage,⁹² this Kabbalist writes:

Behold, the *Tikun* reaches up to the “supernal repentance,” which is the seat of glory⁹³ for what is higher than it, and he is built there⁹⁴ and from there he [the repentant] causes the emanation and the drawing of the light down.⁹⁵ And behold he is bringing about redemption. The righteous of the world, unites with *Knesset Yisrael*, which is called “world” and this is the meaning of what it is said⁹⁶: “Great is the repentance, since it brings redemption to the world” . . . and when he repents, he causes the return of the mother upon her sons,⁹⁷ and behold this is life, which is the secret of repentance, and is the source of life, when it is seizes what it is higher than it and whoever cleaves to it is tantamount to cleaving to life . . . and because his repentance in a full manner, he causes the return of the robbery⁹⁸ and this is the reason for the supernal *tikun* and the union between the two lovers and thus he causes the overpowering of the [attribute of] mercy over [the attribute of] judgment . . . great is the repentance even if done by one individual, since he is forgiven and so also is the entire world.⁹⁹

92. Zohar 3, fol. 16bb, where the superior status of the repentant over the righteous is discussed. The former is connected to the third *sefirah*, the latter to the tenth *sefirah*. See also Idel, “Types of Redemptive Activity,” 271.

93. Compare to the rabbinic dictum deal assesses that the grandeur of the repentance is that it reaches the seat of Glory. See, e.g., *Yalkut Shimeoni*, on Prov, chap. 6, n. 938. However, it seems that ibn Gabbai was influenced by the formulation found in the Byzantine classical book of Kabbalah *Sefer ha-kanah* (Krakau, 1894), fol. 11b, where the phrase “supernal repentance” as pointing to *Binah* occurs together with this dictum!

94. Namely, the person whose soul stems from the *sefirah* of *Binah*, which is the seat of Glory, and a seat for the higher *sefirot*. According to earlier traditions, the soul is connected to the seat of Glory.

95. Drawing down the emanation from a higher to a lower set of divine power is an act that I define as theurgical.

96. bYom 86b.

97. Earlier in the same chapter, ibn Gabbai explained that as an effect of the sins, the mother, namely, the *Binah* is expelled from her palace. See *Avodat ha-kodesh*, 2:35, fol. 66b.

98. *Gezelah*. Ibn Gabbai uses the same term and explains that by not performing the commandments someone is preventing the descent of the influx onto the lower *sefirot*. See *ibid.*

99. *Ibid.*, 2:35, fol. 67a, and see also Idel, “Types of Redemptive Activities,” 272–73, and Goetschel, *Meir ibn Gabbay*, 455–57.

“Redemption” here functions on three different levels: the personal, the theosophical, and the cosmic. On the one hand, the act of the repentant reaches the divine power named Supernal Repentance, *Teshuvah*, which is commonly a symbol for the *sefirah* of *Binah*. This is also the source of the soul and the place of its return. Thus the repentance here is understood as a return of the soul to its source, within the sefirotic realm. Having returned there, the soul is cleaving to the key power within the sefirotic system and is therefore capable of affecting processes in the divine world in more than one way: it affects the sexual union between *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, described as two lovers.¹⁰⁰ It restores the status of the *Binah* as mother of the seven lower *sefirot* which are her sons; it causes the overpowering of the merciful divine power over stern judgment; and it also causes the union of the *sefirah* of *Yesod*, the divine righteous, with the world, namely, the feminine divine power, *Knesset Yisrael*, which is another sexual union. It is here that the term “redemption” occurs: the last *sefirah* is referred to as *Ge’ulah*,—as it is in many other cases in theosophical Kabbalah—and the repentant is understood as causing the redemption of the last divine power by causing its union with the male divine potency. Redemption is, therefore, an intradivine process, achieved by a theurgical operation performed here below.

However, the theurgical operation is not the only type of redemption hinted at in this passage. The term “world,” which is understood symbolically as referring to the last *sefirah*, is understood also in its primary sense as this world, namely the extradivine world. This type of redemption is only hinted at in this passage but is quite clear in other discussion of ibn Gabbai, where the impact of the *Ra’ya’ Mehemna’* passage is plausible:

By the fact that the repentant is always cleaving to his attribute, which is the supernal repentance, behold he is higher than all the courts of judgment and higher than all the punishments and is safeguarded by them and does not fear the punishment of Gehenna nor the “judgment of the ephemeral one,”¹⁰¹ since there is nothing that withstands it [the

100. The theme of two supernal lovers, which stand for the *sefirah* of *Malkhut* and that of *Tiferet*, is a leitmotif in this book. See *Avodat ha-kodesh*, 2:1, fol. 32b, 2:33, fol. 65a.

101. *Din bene halof*. This term is characteristic of the Kabbalah of R. Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi, and it is related to some form of ascent and descent of the soul on the scale of being as part of the process of retribution and punishment. This term occurs again *ibid.*, 2:36, fol. 68a, in the context of the purification of the souls and the end of the two exiles: the corporeal and the spiritual. For this

repentance], since it is the *tikun* that comprises [both] the *tikun* of the supernal and the lower [worlds].¹⁰²

What is fundamental to bear in mind regarding the citations above is the paramount importance of human activity. Redemption, amending, or perfection all depend on the human decision to repent and there is nothing that can prevent it and its ensuing redemptive effects. This activist approach is characteristic of the later layer of the Zohar, as it has been quoted and discussed above; it has been absorbed in the passage of ibn Gabbai, as well as in the general approach of this Kabbalist too. Key to understanding ibn Gabbai is a theme that is not found in the zoharic passage discussed above which served as a blueprint for the discussions of ibn Gabbai: the motif of cleaving to the source. It is by means of this act that the repentant transcends the mundane world and even the seven lower *sefirot*. It is not only the ascent that is important but also keeping close contact with the third *sefirah* that contributes to the acquisition of the special powers. To be sure, this motif is not new in ibn Gabbai; already at the end of the thirteenth century, we find similar discussions in theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah,¹⁰³ however it was he who integrated it within a more complex structure.

Still, in other instances ibn Gabbai allows some room for the activity of the messiah. He asserts that “with the coming of the messianic king all will be repaired . . . for the curtain that separates and prevents [the union of all things with God] will be removed, and then the purpose of creation will be fulfilled.”¹⁰⁴ Elsewhere, this Kabbalist claims that the messiah will complete the intention of creation by causing the return of the diadem, namely, the last *sefirah*, to its pristine, prelapsarian state and the government to its former situation.¹⁰⁵ According to another statement, the messiah will eradicate all the evil parts of reality,¹⁰⁶ a view reminiscent of the

concept of vertical transition of the soul, see Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, 227–28; Shlomo Pines, “Shi’ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi’s *Kuzari*,” 245–47; Moshe Idel, “The Meaning of ‘*Ta’amei Ha-’Ofot Ha-Teme’in*’ of R. David ben Yehuda He-Hasid,” in *‘Alei Shefer: Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought Presented to Rabbi Dr. Alexander Safran*, ed. M. Hallamish (Hebrew; Ramat Gan, 1990), 11–27.

102. *‘Avodat ha-kodesh*, 2:35, fol. 67b.

103. See Idel, “Types of Redemptive Activities,” 273, nn. 82, 85.

104. *‘Avodat ha-kodesh*, 2:38, fol. 70a; and Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 48; and Goetschel, *Meir ibn Gabbai*, 459–60.

105. *‘Avodat ha-kodesh*, 2:38, fol. 69b.

106. *Ibid.*, 3:64, fol. 143b. See also 2:39, fol. 70b, where the struggle between good and bad is conceived of an ongoing combat for generations.

Manichaean one that is found in mid-thirteenth-century Kabbalah. In fact, the messiah himself, who was of “another seed” before his revelation, will turn from bad to good as well. Therefore, without the transformation of the messiah himself there is no way to accomplish the redemption, which is related to a restoration of the state of unity between the *sefirot*, an ideal repeatedly mentioned by this Kabbalist.¹⁰⁷

This more activist approach to the role of the messiah is in conflict, however, with the formulation that the messiah cannot come without a prior purification.¹⁰⁸ Scholem, who dealt with these two stands, concluded that the “apparently contradictory statements are really complementary.”¹⁰⁹ Yet I find those statements to be contradictory indeed, since they reflect different approaches found before ibn Gabbai, as does the following: according to a brief but important statement, which has been overlooked by Scholem, the purification of the souls is an essential part of redemption and of the arrival of the messiah, but he will come in each and every cosmic cycle, what I called macrochronos, designated as *shemithah*, namely, each unit of seven thousand years.¹¹⁰ This means that there is no final redemption, and in each and every cosmic eon, the messiah will come to rescue the people. This is quite a circular type of history if it is history at all. Thus, in addition to the multiple types of redemption, this act repeats itself in time, though it happens in cycles that are different in their nature, and thus we may assume that the anonymous Kabbalist had different forms of redemptions in mind.

Astrological cycles as understood by some Kabbalists—another totally different type of reasoning—informs ibn Gabbai’s theory of messianism as well. This means that the active contribution of the Kabbalists or of the repentants is much less significant that we might have assumed from other statements. No doubt this is the result of the impact of *Sefer batemunah*. Later on in this book ibn Gabbai explains the purification of the souls as part of the process of metempsychosis, just another explanation of the messianic event.¹¹¹ Ibn Gabbai resorts also to Maimonides’ vision

107. Ibid., 4:14, fol. 166a. Interestingly enough in 2:38, fol. 70a, the union between the two lovers, which is now invisible, will turn visible in the messianic future. The *hiero gamos* is invisible now because of the deficiency of the creatures. This issue deserves a detailed analysis which cannot be done here. In any case it should be compared to some views of the Besht.

108. Ibid., 2:37, fol. 69b.

109. *Sabbatai Sevi*, 48.

110. *Avodat ha-kodesh*, 2: 32, fol. 64b. For an elaboration on this theme, see the passage written probably a generation or two later by an anonymous Kabbalist, discussed in Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 159.

111. *Avodat ha-kodesh*, 2: 37, fol. 68b.

of the messianic age that the natural order will not change at all.¹¹² Poised at an advanced stage in the development of kabbalistic speculation (which found expression in different schools), ibn Gabbai tries to be as ecumenical as possible, but the price of ecumenism is conceptual coherence. Let me turn now to another passage dealing with exile and redemption that has gone unnoticed in scholarship.¹¹³

You should know that the two blessings¹¹⁴ have been established in relation to two exiles, the one for the exile of the body, the other for the exile of the soul. First we asked [in prayer] for the redemption of the body, since he will first redeem it, and afterwards we ask for the redemption of the soul, and this is the reason why [the latter] was belated, since the redemption of the soul is after the redemption of the body, since the exile of the souls was first and the exile of the body was later, and they [the bodies] are redeemed first. This is what the masters of worship¹¹⁵ have received and they are a secret of the secrets of the Torah. And the redemption of the souls that have been rejected¹¹⁶ is for the sake of the high . . . and since it is incumbent to ask in this blessing for the redemption of the souls, they have comprised in it also the redemption of the bodies, and this is mentioned in “You should bring us together”¹¹⁷ and since there is no exile after these redemptions, they said¹¹⁸ “You should blow the great Shofar for our freedom,” since it is the Shofar that liberates the slaves to the freedom of the Jubilee, which is the fiftieth year, and there is also a hint at their saying “You should bring us together” refers to the redemption of the Shekhinah. And if it is so this is the need of the high also.¹¹⁹

Three forms of redemption are explicitly mentioned together with two exiles, but a third exile, that of the Shekhinah, though not mentioned, is

112. Ibid., 2: 38, fol. 69b.

113. See Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 47–48.

114. Of the eighteen benedictions to be quoted below in this citation.

115. This is a title for the Kabbalists, recurring in kabbalistic literature since the early fourteenth-century anonymous book titled *Ma'arekhet ha-'elohut*.

116. The Hebrew form *Nidehu* is found in many texts related to the fate of the soul that has been prevented from entering the divine world and is roaming in a mesocosm or undergoes metempsychosis.

117. In the Eighteen Benedictions.

118. Ibid.

119. *Avodat ha-kodesh* 2:10, fol. 40a. See Appendix A.4.

For the redemption of the Shekhinah, see also *ibid.*, 2:36, fol. 68b.

implicit. In ibn Gabbai's book, which is an outstanding treatise dealing with the centrality of human theurgical activity, the rabbinic expression "for the sake of the high," namely, for the sake of the divinity, is of utmost importance. It adds the new form of redemption as envisioned by the Kabbalists. It is not only the spiritual and material redemptions of the humans as individuals or as a group that matter but preeminently the redemption of a divine feminine hypostasis, the Shekhinah. The insistence on the priority of the bodily redemption that precedes the spiritual one is obviously influenced by *Sefer ha-temunah* as has been discussed in the previous section; this book is quoted several times by ibn Gabbai despite the differences between the main approaches of the two Kabbalists.

Written at the end of the first third of the sixteenth century, ibn Gabbai's book is only one of the kabbalistic references to the redemption of the Shekhinah in Kabbalah, the other one being the somewhat later view of R. Joseph Karo, who started his career in the same former Byzantine area as did ibn Gabbai.¹²⁰ Both drew from earlier strata of kabbalistic literature, especially the book of the Zohar, where the rescue of the Shekhinah is explicitly mentioned.¹²¹ Let me point out that this passage occurs not only in a classic of Kabbalah like *Avodat ha-kodesh*, but it also is repeated verbatim in R. Isaiah Horowitz's voluminous commentary on the prayerbook titled *Sha'ar ha-shamayim*, a book printed at the end of the seventeenth century in Amsterdam.¹²² In addition, there is a multiplicity of forms of redemption and messianic dates in the prolific oeuvre of R. Moses Cordovero.¹²³

Therefore, long before the emergence of East European Hasidism in the mid-eighteenth century, Kabbalists formulated a variety of different schemes of complex redemptions, different from each other, which could be part of the conceptual panorama of the founder of Hasidism. Ibn Gabbai conjoins the pairs of human body/soul redemptions with the divine redemption in a triad that is reminiscent of the few Beshtian traditions to be discussed below. Let me therefore survey the issue of multiple redemptions in early Hasidism and attempt to relate them to my previous discussion.

120. Rachel Elior, "R. Joseph Karo, and R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov—Mystical Metamorphosis, Kabbalistic Inspiration, Spiritual Internalization," *Studies in Spirituality* 17 (2007): 267–319.

121. See Idel, "Types of Redemptive Activities," 269–70.

122. *Sha'ar ha-shamayim* (New York, 1954), fol. 97a.

123. See Bracha Sack, "Three Times of Redemption in R. Moses Cordovero's "Or Yakar" (Hebrew), in *Messianism and Eschatology*, 281–92.

REDEMPTIVE THOUGHT IN EARLY EAST EUROPEAN HASIDISM

One of the widespread scholarly understandings of Hasidism is the assumption that in the early stages of its development, the messianic views stemming from Lurianism have been neutralized, liquidated, or obliterated, as a powerful religious force. Formulated most famously by Gershom Scholem,¹²⁴ this approach has been embraced by a series of scholars, though others, especially Ben-Zion Dinur and Isaiah Tishby, have argued that early Hasidism contains strong messianic elements inspired by Lurianic thought.¹²⁵ The either/or alternatives presuppose strong phenomenologies, which presume the presence of only one mode of approach to messianism. The two competing schools, which diverge over their evaluation of the role of messianism in early Hasidism, are both essentialist insofar as the nature of the “messianic idea” is concerned; the dispute between them has to do with proving or rejecting the presence of an essentialist type of messianism. This “monotonic” approach is, however, too simplistic, particularly when we inspect the different discussions on redemption and messianism in early Hasidism.¹²⁶

The notion of a double exile—and also a double redemption—surfaces in a book by R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye:

And the [verse where] it is written “She will cry and weep during the night”¹²⁷ includes a double weeping during the exile that is similar to

124. See his *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, 176–202, and *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 329, 330, 335. This approach has been accepted widely by many scholars. See, e.g., R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, “Mysticism and Messianism, the Case of Hasidism,” in *Man and His Salvation: Essays in Memory of the Late Professor S. G. F. Brandon*, ed. E. J. Sharpe and J. R. Hinnells (Manchester, 1973), 305–14.

125. Isaiah Tishby, *Studies in Kabbalah and Its Branches* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1993), 2:509–10. Tishby adduced important evidence for the existence of millenarian, or acute messianism in non-Hasidic authors who were contemporaries of the Besht. See *ibid.*, 478–503. For an English translation of the pertinent discussion, taken from the much broader article in Hebrew on early Hasidism by B.-Z. Dinur, see “The Messianic-Prophetic Role of the Baal Shem Tov,” in *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*, ed. M. Saperstein (New York, 1992), 379, 381–82. See more recently Jonathan V. Dauber, “The Baal Shem Tov and the Messiah: A Reappraisal of the Baal Shem Tov’s Letter to R. Gershon of Kutov,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 16 (2009): 210–41.

126. For a more complex treatment of all the traditions related to the Besht as a redemptive and messianic figure “Mystical Redemption and Messianism in R. Israel Ba’al Shem Tov’s Teachings,” *Kabbalah* 24 (2010). For a treatment of the personal redemption in early Hasidism, see Morris M. Faierstein, “Personal Redemption in Hasidism,” in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert (London, 1996), 214–24.

127. Lam 1.2. In the Hebrew the same root is used twice.

night. And there are two exiles, one is the corporeal exile among the nations, the other is the exile within the evil instinct that is the spiritual one; the soul is in exile within the evil instinct, as I heard from my teacher: “Draw near to my soul, redeem it.”¹²⁸ And this [the crying] emerges because he is bothered by the two, and the crying is double, one caused his being removed from this world, so that they will be unable to prepare themselves for the next world, and he is removed from losing the next world.¹²⁹

Here we find the concept of “corporeal exile” as paralleling, to a certain extent, the concept of “general exile” in other teachings of the Besht. In a seminal statement, which demonstrates the comprehensive approach of the Besht to issues of eschatology, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye,¹³⁰ the main preserver of numerous traditions of his master, wrote as follows:

It is necessary to comment upon the reason why there is a blowing and acclaiming while they are sitting? And we shall comment upon [the verse] “Happy is the nation that knows to acclaim thee.”¹³¹ And this is a difficult question. Did not Satan know that the custom of Israel is so [namely, to acclaim], and why [then] does he mix? But the issue is that just as he mixes in the general redemption, as they blow by the great Shofar,¹³² so does he mix in the individual redemption as it is written¹³³ “Draw near to my soul, redeem it” . . . And as I heard in the name of my teacher, that this is the reason why every Hasid should redeem his soul from the evil instinct, especially during Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom

128. Ps 69.19.

129. *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* (Koretz, 1780), fol. 166a. See Appendix A.5.

This view of the Besht recurs also in R. Jacob Joseph's book, without mentioning his name. For a possible source for the view that the soul found exile within the evil instinct and should be redeemed from it, see the *Commentary on the Haggadah* by R. Joseph Gikatilla, printed in *Haggadah Shelemah*, ed. M. Kasher and Sh. Ashkenazi (Jerusalem, 1967), 114. The commentary has been printed for the first time in 1602 in Venice.

130. On this author, see Samuel H. Dresner, *Zaddik: The Doctrine of the Zaddik according to the Writings of Rabbi Yaakov of Polnoy* (New York, 1974); and Gedalya Nigal, *Minbag ve-'Edah*, (Jerusalem, 1962).

131. Ps 89.15.

132. Cf. Isa 27.13.

133. Ps 69.19. This verse recurs many times in the traditions in the name of the Besht, some of which will be adduced below. However, in some cases, it appears in similar contexts even when his name is not mentioned. See, e.g., in R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye's *Tsafnat pa'aneah*, ed. Gedalya Nigal (Jerusalem, 1989), 13, 16, and in *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, fol. 95a.

Kippur, etc., “and the words of the sage are precious.”¹³⁴ And if I had no doubt,¹³⁵ I would say what is written in the writings of R. Isaac Luria, blessed be his memory, that because of the voice of the Shofar in this lower world, the voice of the supernal Shofar of the next world arose, etc., see there).¹³⁶ That is, regarding the voice of the Shofar and its admonition, his intention is to awaken from sleep the lower man via the voice of the Shofar of this world in order to cause the voice of the supernal Shofar to awaken the supernal man from his sleep.¹³⁷

The basic distinction that concerns us here is that between two forms of exile and redemption: the personal and the general. I am not confident that the general and the corporeal can be totally identified. We may speak rather of variants of a basic model. In the present state of research, I do not see a way to prove which interpretation is better. Nevertheless, let me summarize the main content of the above passages: they deal with redemption, though not with messianism, since this term does not appear. It is difficult to determine from these discussions whether they are closer to a millenarian approach, though I assume they do not include apocalyptic elements. However, in addition to the two redemptions to take place here (the individual and the general), another redemptive event is highlighted: the blowing of the Shofar below has an impact on a higher Shofar, which awakens the supernal man. According to a similar discussion, the supernal Shofar is identical to the third *sefirah*, *Binah*.¹³⁸ We may extrapolate from the discussion of the impact of the Shofar how the Hasidic masters understood the Lurianic statement: the Besht regards the High Holidays, when the Shofar was blown, as a moment of individual redemption. We may assume that R. Jacob Joseph understood Luria's statement about the “supernal man” as some form of redemption too. Thus, we have here three forms of redemption, two of them related to each other in one way or another. The individual redemption is related or concomitant to the supernal redemption. How the general redemption is related to the other two is not clear from this passage.

134. This formula constitutes a sign for the end of a quote, especially from the dicta of the Besht. However, it is obvious that the longer or original teaching of the Besht is not quoted here, as in other cases.

135. This expression demonstrates that R. Jacob Joseph was aware that his interpretation may be conceptually doubtful. The term *Adam 'Elyon*, is not used by the Besht.

136. See *Peri 'ets hayim*, Sha'ar ha-Shofar, chap. 2.

137. *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, fol. 198a. See Appendix A.6.

138. See *ibid.*, fol. 189b.

However, in an explicit manner we find a wider pyramid of redemptions, in a passage quoted in the name of the Besht, by R. Gedalyahu of Lynitz, a late eighteenth-century Hasidic author:

The Ba'al Shem Tov said: "Draw near to my soul, redeem it,"¹³⁹ which is the prayer for the personal redemption of his soul from the exile within the evil instinct, and when everyone will be redeemed by a personal redemption, the general redemption will come afterwards, and [then] the messiah will come, be it close in our days, Amen. And all the people, "both the young and old, will know him,"¹⁴⁰ [so as] to do everything for the sake of him, Blessed be he.¹⁴¹

The advent of the messiah is envisioned in an explicit manner as preceded by the general redemption, which in turn is preceded and caused by the accumulative personal redemptions. The concatenation of the three stages is obvious, as is the causal linkage between them. Here the role of the messiah is minimized, since his arrival follows the existence of general redemption and does not trigger it. Thus, redemption, personal and general, does not exclude the messiah but integrates it in a more comprehensive scheme. From my perspective this passage is undoubtedly messianic, *though it is clearly referring to a nonapocalyptic event.*

Thus, after the two redemptions are realized, knowledge of God and worship will be totally dedicated to him, without the impediments related to national subjugation, namely, the intrusion of the evil instinct, or the necessity to elevate the sparks of the Shekhinah found within the shells. When everything is liberated, everyone is capable of concentrating exclusively on God. Nothing especially apocalyptic is presupposed in this concatenation of eschatological events, though a general (that is, national) redemption is assumed. Thus, two foci are presupposed here as paramount: the individual and the society or the nation.

It should be mentioned that unlike all the other traditions concerning the two forms of exile and redemption found in the books of R. Jacob Joseph (in which the messiah is not mentioned), he does appear here.

139. Ps 69.19.

140. Jer 31.33.

141. *Sefer tesbu'ot ben* (Brooklyn, 1982), p. 18. See Appendix A.7.

See also p. 52 for a similar teaching again in the name of the Besht, and Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 218. Let me point out that a nonapocalyptic vision of the time of the messiah is found in a tradition that R. Phinehas of Koretz adduced in the name of the Besht, that in the time of the messiah, there are not going to be killings. See *Midrash Pinḥas* (Ashdod, 2001), 193: **וְאֵם בִּיאַת הַמָּשִׁיחַ לֹא יִהְיוּ הַרְגוֹת**.

According to this quote, the messiah is destined to come only after the stage of “general redemption,” namely, of the national or collective, and therefore he is not instrumental in bringing it about. From this point of view, he will appear only when the spiritual system within which his nature has been defined reaches its perfection. We may assume therefore that this formulation, which mentions also the messiah, is later than the earlier ones, when only a double type of redemption was mentioned. Thus, we may assume that the Besht embraced a double type of redemption first, in a manner reminiscent of Abulafia, while later adopting a triple type of redemption similar to and, in this case I assume, under the influence of the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah.

There is another common denominator to the passages adduced above: they do not deal with, or even mention, the redemption of a divine power such as the Shekhinah, or of divine sparks, a hypostatic messiah or of *Adam Kadmon*. The existence of both the positive common denominators and the negative ones in those passages is the main reason why I see in them a model, which I propose to designate as the agonistic one, since it deals with the struggle between the soul and the evil instinct. In both its personal and general forms, redemption is a this-worldly phenomenon. As I have noted in earlier work, I propose to see in this model an earlier development in the thought of the Besht, in comparison to the two other models that have been discussed there.¹⁴² The agonistic model is a more ascetic and interiorized one, on the one hand, and yet combined with a collective dimension on the other.

Let me turn now to some discussions, based on a threefold distinction of forms of exile and redemption, which are cited also in the name of the Besht in the very books mentioned above. The important change that may be discerned in the series of passages to be quoted below in this section is the appearance of another type of redemption: that of the Shekhinah and, according to some other texts, her sparks.¹⁴³ The anthropocen-

142. See Idel, “Prayer, Ecstasy and Alien Thoughts in the Besht’s Religious World,” in *Let the Old Make Way for the New: Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Eastern European Jewry, Presented to Immanuel Etkeš*, vol. 1, *Hasidism and the Musar Movement*, ed. D. Assaf and A. Rapoport-Albert (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2009), 57–120.

143. See, in more general terms, a study dealing with Hasidism rather than with the Besht specifically, Louis Jacobs, “The Uplifting of Sparks in Later Jewish Mysticism,” in *Jewish Spirituality*, ed. A. Green (New York, 1987), 2:99–126. On the concept of the sparks of the Shekhinah in Cordoverian texts, see R. Elijah da Vidas’s *Reshit ḥokhmah*, ed. C. Waldman (Jerusalem, 1984), Gate of Teshuvah, chap. 6, 1:805: “by the purification of his soul he purifies the sparks of the Shekhinah.” For the nexus between the sparks of the Shekhinah and the exile of the

tric proclivity so evident in the agonic model is marginalized in the passages exemplifying this model. Instead, we witness the preoccupation with the feminine divine as the counterpart of the divine male, and with her immanent sparks, which should be restored to their original place where they dwelt before their fall into the depths of the shells. It is some of these passages that constitute what I will call the harmonistic model in which a full range of redemptive acts is mentioned, and sometimes even concatenated with each other. Similar to the agonic model, where the good and evil instincts are interlocked in a continuous struggle and should be disengaged as part of the redemptive process, and the Jews are dispersed among the nations and should be saved as part of the general redemption, in the harmonistic model, the mixture of the divine and the evil powers is the major problem that needs to be solved in order to redeem the divine particles.

This model puts at its center the acts of redemption related to the Shekhinah, and the passages analyzed below problematize Scholem's assumption that Hasidism as a whole has interpreted the elevation of the sparks only as part of personal redemption, thus neutralizing what he describes as "Messianism."¹⁴⁴ This general statement does not hold up when an examination of specific passages found in early Hasidism is undertaken. So, for example, we learn from a tradition in the name of the Besht that

it is necessary to elevate the alien thoughts through the three lines,¹⁴⁵ and one should pay attention to which line each alien thought [stems

Shekhinah see already R. Abraham Azulai, *Hesed le-Avraham* (Lemberg, 1863), fols. 20ab, 28cd, 35b, and R. Isaiah Horowitz, *Sha'ar ha-shamayyim*, fol. 75b. See also M. Idel, "Jewish Mysticism and the Jews of Arab/Moslem Lands," *Journal for the Study of Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry* 1 (February 2007): 35–39. The redemption of the individual sparks is another example of the individual redemption that precedes both the redemption of the Shekhinah and the general redemption. For another formulation of this view in the Besht and his student R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, where the congregation creates the stature of the messiah, which means that the individual redemption accumulatively adds up to a more general redemption, see the passages analyzed in Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 221–34.

144. See Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 329, 330, 335. Naturally, this statement has been reiterated in scholarship many times since, without, however, adducing any evidence for its correctness. See, e.g., Rachel Elior, "Messianic Expectations and the Spiritualization of Religious Life in the Sixteenth Century," *Revue des études Juives* 145 (1986): 35–49; or Stephen Sharot, *Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic, A Sociological Analysis of Jewish Religious Movements* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1982), 150–51. For a critique of this view, see Idel, "Prayer, Ecstasy and Alien Thoughts," 83, n. 108, 84–85.

145. On the three theosophical lines and their role in the uplifting of the sparks, see the numerous quotes in the name of the Besht found in, e.g., *Toledot*

from] so that he will be able to elevate it to its [specific] source. And these three lines are the three forefathers, as it is known.¹⁴⁶ And behold the shell is called curse, that is an alien thought; and it is the exile of the Shekhinah within the depths of the shells, as it is written: "Draw near to my soul, redeem it,"¹⁴⁷ namely, elevate the parts of the soul, which constitute the sparks of the Shekhinah, from the shell, toward the holiness that is called redemption; as I heard from my teacher, it is incumbent to pray for the exile of someone's soul, spirit and higher soul which are found within the evil instinct, etc., and the words of the sages are gracious.¹⁴⁸

The reference to the mentor, the Besht, is not so clear: is he quoted with reference to the first part of the above passage, dealing with the exile of the Shekhinah, or to the second part dealing with the material belonging to the agonic model. It seems, nevertheless, that the latter is more plausible, but let me point out that according to several passages that will be cited immediately in this section, this is also the view of the Besht. In fact we have here two models brought together in the same passage, though they are presented separately. Three terms, absent from the earlier texts discussed above, which are adduced in the name of the Besht are main components of the first part of the last passage, which is itself a composite of a quote from the Besht and of an interpretation that precedes it, authored by his disciple. These components are: the exile of the Shekhinah and her sparks, which are sometime described as the various parts of the soul, the shells or husks as alien thoughts, and finally the need to elevate the former from the latter. The shift of the attention to the sparks of the Shekhinah might be related to a topic that is pertinent to our discussion here: the assumption that the souls of the Jews are the sparks of the messiah.¹⁴⁹

Ya'akov Yosef, fol. 201a, and in R. Aharon Kohen Perlov of Apta, *Keter Shem Tov* (Brooklyn, 1987), fols. 19c, 40bc, 55d, 58a. Therefore, also this part of the quoted passage, though not reported as the view of the Besht but as a form of interpretation of the quote, is quite consistent with his views.

146. "As it is known" points to the fact that this is not the original view of R. Jacob Joseph.

147. Ps 69.19.

148. *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, fol. 35d. See Appendix A.8.

On the assumption that the elevation of the sparks was conceived of as a great secret dealing with messianic enterprise in another passage of the Besht, see Mendel Piekartz, *Between Ideology and Reality, Humility, Ayin, Self-Negation and Devekut in the Hasidic Thought* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1994), 79.

149. This issue is discussed in my "Mystical Redemption and Messianism in R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov's Teachings" (in preparation).

A COMPARISON AND SOME CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen above, a threefold categorization of exiles and redemptions appears in some Beshtian teachings. It consists in the material exile and redemption, the spiritual exile and redemption, and the exile and redemption of the Shekhinah. The similarity between these three elements and that found in one of the passages quoted from ibn Gabbai's *Avodat ha-kodesh* is, in my opinion, remarkable and is, moreover, unparalleled in other sources. A major difference between the Hasidic and the kabbalistic discussions is a matter of terminology that may nevertheless touch a much deeper cord. In the Hasidic texts, the term "general redemption" occurs, while in some of the kabbalistic ones, the bodily redemption is referred. As seen in the material quoted from R. Jacob Joseph, general redemption means, at least in some instances, national redemption. However, ibn Gabbai, following his kabbalistic sources, speaks about the bodily redemption in a vaguer manner.

And yet, what distinguishes the kabbalistic triad from the Hasidic one is not so much the nature of the three exiles/redemptions as the specific concatenations between and among them. In the Hasidic discussions as found in R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, the spiritual redemption precedes the theurgical one, and only then the national or the material redemption will be ushered in. However, in the kabbalistic passage from *Sefer ha-temunah*, the material or the corporeal redemption precedes the spiritual one. Thus, Hasidic views of redemption, though in my opinion dependent on the anatomy of the kabbalistic discussion, offer another physiology. In principle, we should not separate too much the triadic discussions in Hasidism from the kabbalistic ones. And yet, we should nevertheless put in sharp relief the significant divergences between the two. It seems plausible that Hasidic understandings of the triad of redemptions as culminating in a national redemption are more concerned with the spiritual redemption as essential preparation for the "general" one, namely, as an instrumental event. Thus, the spiritual accent on individual redemption in Hasidism is not divorced from a national one but is in fact conceived of as indispensable as it is preparing the latter. Thus, unlike the impression drawn from prevailing scholarship, which focuses on the Hasidic emphasis on individual redemption alone, in fact we find in this literature the first explicit presentation that links the general redemption to the spiritual one.

Has this type of concatenation anything to do with the two main tendencies in Hasidic literature: the Neoplatonic one, dealing with spiritual redemption, and the Hermetic one, dealing with material redemption, or

in more technical terms, the concept of *devekut*, or the ascent toward the divine on the one hand, and the ideal of drawing down the influx or on the other hand, cleaving to the supernal spirituality here below, which is related to the concept of worship in materiality?

The above discussions allow some conclusions regarding the constellation of messianic ideas in Kabbalah and early Hasidism. Some of the most widespread scholarly assumptions, which have been repeated time and again, seem to require substantial qualifications and, in some important cases, even drastic revisions. Let me enumerate some of them:

[A] In one of his essays pertinent to our discussion here, Scholem has expressed the opinion that personal redemption is unknown in Judaism before 1750: "The question of private or individual redemption is a totally modern dilemma, and does not exist in the Jewish tradition before 1750. If it exists afterwards, it is still a debatable issue."¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that individual redemption was indeed found in several important discussions, philosophical and kabbalistic, long before 1750.¹⁵¹

[B] An analysis of some of the pertinent Hasidic texts, and others that have been analyzed elsewhere, show that there are examples of a conjugation between the individual and general redemption, and in one case, even messianic redemption. I am not acquainted with a single example from the teachings reported in the name of the Besht in which individual redemption is treated in and of itself, without pointing to possible reverberations on other levels. This is the reason why the following statement by Scholem relating to East European Hasidism is, in my opinion, problematic:

Individual redemption is to be restricted from the truly Messianic redemption of all. The Rabbi of Polnoye is tireless in expounding the thesis that our whole life is concerned only with the non-Messianic aspect of redemption. We can do nothing in that regard, it is wholly up to God.¹⁵²

150. Scholem, *‘Od davar*, 271. See also Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 79, 352–53, n. 51.

151. In addition to Abulafia's example, which has been addressed above, there are philosophical examples. See the philosophical texts discussed in Shalom Rosenberg, "The Return to the Garden of Eden: Remarks for the History of the Idea of the Restorative Redemption in the Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *The Messianic Idea in Jewish Thought: A Study Conference in Honour of the Eightieth Birthday of Gershom Scholem* ed. S. Reem (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1990), 84–86; and Dov Schwartz, "The Neutralization of the Messianic Idea in Medieval Jewish Rationalism" (Hebrew), *HUCA* 64 (1993): 41–44; and Idel, "Types of Redemptive Activities," 256–63.

152. *The Messianic Idea*, 194–95.

What is “truly” messianic for Scholem is, implicitly but basically, an apocalyptic messianism, which in my opinion is not “truer” than any other form of messianism. In the passages I have adduced above from R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, it is hard to corroborate Scholem’s claim.

[C] The comparison between the three types of redemptions, as found in *Ra’ya’ Mehemna’*, in *Avodat ha-kodesh*, and some of the Beshtian teachings, shows that some teachings of the Besht are consistent with discussions concerning multiple redemptions that predate the expulsion from Spain, and that have nothing to do with Lurianic Kabbalah. All three authors reflect a kind of ritualistic approach that was conjugated with the assumption of the existence of multiple forms of redemption. The noetic and the deterministic type of messianic speculations are much less visible in these authors and in Hasidism in general. It would also seem as if a process of neutralization of Sabbatian messianism is implausible, if we accept the relevance of ibn Gabbai’s threefold distinction for some of the Besht’s teachings. From this point of view, the view of the Besht is not a new departure but a formulation drawn from the field of possibilities created already by kabbalistic thought. The difference between him and ibn Gabbai is not essential, and I doubt whether the discrepancy could be explained by different historical circumstances.

[D] The history of the “messianic idea,” as found in the available scholarly accounts related to Jewish mysticism, is highly impressionistic. Some of the relevant texts have not yet been investigated by scholars, and not only those still in manuscript but even when those available in printed sources. The neglect of the wide panorama of pertinent kabbalistic sources in academic studies, which might have been known by both later Kabbalists and by the Besht and his followers, has created some faulty or incomplete scholarly accounts. The near-total absence of Abraham Abulafia’s complex messianic thought in Scholem’s discourse¹⁵³ and even more so in other scholars’ discussions of the so-called messianic idea is just one example of this impressionistic description that has been repeated *ad nauseam*. Great scholars may have correct impressions even when they do not present the entire range of material that support their assessments, but such impressions should be checked before being repeated by other scholars.

[E] The concatenation of the concept of *tikun* and redemption recurs many times in ibn Gabbai’s book discussed above. In his case, this is a theurgical operation, as it is later in R. Isaac Luria, namely, reparation of

153. This absence is conspicuous in the essays collected as *The Messianic Idea*, and his marginalization is obvious in the introductory survey of *Sabbatai Sevi*.

the deity, though the details of the amending process differ substantially. The assumption that was formulated by Scholem that the “Lurianic” *tikun*, namely, the theurgical amending, has been neutralized in Hasidism in favor of *devekut* requires very significant qualification. So, for example, in an interesting discussion, R. Jacob Joseph envisions the individual *tikun*, *tikun perati*, which means in this context a process of spiritualization, as necessary for the general *tikun*, *tikun kelali*, just as we have seen above in the context of two sorts of redemptions.¹⁵⁴

[F] The proposed integrative vision as formulated here, a vision that emphasizes the importance of multiple redemptions that culminate in a national one, is more plausible in the framework of a movement that created many communities, such as Hasidism, than the prevalent scholarly assumption regarding this movement that presumes that individual redemption is the ultimate goal of religious life. Moreover, Scholem’s assumption that the experience of *devekut* never had a messianic overtone is not sustained by sources.¹⁵⁵

[G] In other words, the systemic understanding of the development of the variety of messianic ideas discussed above is less affected by historical events than by elaborations, tensions, and syntheses of ideas in the nascent period of Kabbalah in the thirteenth century. Without taking these elements into account, no serious historical treatment of later forms of messianic ideas can be undertaken. Speculations about the possible affinity between external events and eidetic developments are always welcome, but they must be advanced only after one becomes acquainted with the history of the material he/she is dealing with, not before. As seen above, claims made about changes and innovations related to the impact of historical events, or attempts to point out innovation in general, may sometimes be quite precarious.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, a reconceptualization of the manner in which the constellation of messianic ideas in Jewish mysticism should be treated in scholarship is necessary. The goal should be to inte-

154. See *Toledot Ya’akov Yosef*, fol. 90d. For Scholem’s claim, see his *The Messianic Idea*, 216–17. For the history of the term *tikun kelali* in Hasidism, see Zvi Mark, “The Process of Crystallization of the General Tikkun, the Particular Tikkun to Nighty Emission and the Pilgrimage to the Tomb of R. Nahman of Bratzlav and their Affinity to the Messianic Tension” (Hebrew), *Daat* 56 (2005): 101–33.

155. See Scholem, *The Messianic Idea*, 185, but compare to Abraham Abulafia’s approach to *devekut* that does have a clear messianic valence. Cf. his *Maftaḥ ha-tokbeḥot*, ed. A. Gross (Jerusalem, 2001), 78.

156. See my forthcoming “Modes of Cleaving to ‘Letters’ and Their Effects in R. Israel Ba’al Shem Tov’s Teachings.”

grate better the pertinent materials that have been ignored so far, and to understand in a more substantive way their relationship to the historical settings of different concepts, as well as the concatenations among them.

APPENDIX A

1. MS Oxford-Bodleiana Catalogue Neubauer, 2360, fol. 11a–b
 ביאת הגואל אנו וכל הנמשכים אחר האמת משיגים אותה בכל עת ואין תקותינו בביאתו בעבור שההמון חושבים. אבל הסבה והוא שהפתאים אוהבים ביאת הגואל מפני שישלטו על שונאיהם ושיתעשרו משלל אויביהם ושירכבו סוסיהם וחמוריהם ושישכבו את נשותיהם היפות ושיאכלו וישתו לשובע מעדני הגוף ומטעמים משונים וישתגעו בהבלי העולם הזה בממשלה ובשררה ומעלה וגדולה שקרית וכיוצא באלו ההבלים שהם צורכי שתי הנשמות המתאוה והחיה. ואלה הדברים הם מוכרחים לכל חכם ואלו היה איפשר שיעמוד גופו מבלתם לא היה חפץ בהם לעולם ואפי' אם היה מוצא אותם מזומני' כל שכן שלא היה רודף אחריהם ולא מבקש אותם על כן אין ראוי להאמין שהשם ית' ישלח לנו המלך המשיח אלא למלאת החסרונות של דעת והבינה והחכמה ולא לדבר אחר. ר"ל שזאת תהיה הכונה האמתית ומתוכה יתפשטו שאר הטובות ויבא בכלל גמול הנשמה החכמה וגמול שתי הנשמות לפי הצורך.
2. *Commentary on Sefer ha-Melits*, MS Rome-Angelica 38, fol. 9a
 ששם משיח משותף לשלשה עניינים אלה. משיח יקרא תחילה השכל הפועל באמת. ומשיח יקרא האיש והעתיד להוציאנו מן הגלות מתחת ידי האומות בכח שישפיע עליו מן השכל הפועל. ומשיח יקרא השכל החומרי האנושי ההיולאני שהוא הגואל והמושיע הנפש וכל כוחותיה הנפשיות המעולות מתחת ידי המלכים הגופניים ועממיהם וכוחותיהם התאויות הפחותות. וזה העניין מצוה וחובה לגלותו לכל משכיל ממשכילי ישראל להושיעו מפני שיש דברים רבים שהם הפך דעות המון הרבנים, כל שכן שהם חולקים על כל מחשבות המון עמי הארצות.
3. *Mafteah ha-Hokhmah*, ed. Amnon Gross (Jerusalem, 2001), pp. 71–72
 כי ענין הקרבנות והגלות והגאולה ונחלת הארץ הם ענינים נקשרים ומחייבים זה מזה. כי הקרבן שמו מעיד עליו שהוא קירוב הכחות האלוהיות אל הכחות האנושיות ויתחייב ממנו גלות לגופים וגאולה לנפשות. ואשר פדה אלהים את נפשו כאברהם כל העולם שלו וכל שכן בהיות השם מחבר אליו כח מכחו בסוד ה' שנתן מן השם בשמו והוא אות
4. *Avodat ha-Kodesh* 2.10, fol. 40a
 יש לדעת כי נתקנו שתי ברכות אלו על שני גליות, האחד גלות הגוף, והשני גלות הנשמה. ובתחלה שאלנו גאולת הגוף כי כן יגאל בראשונה, ואחר כך שאלנו על גאולת הנשמה, ולפיכך נתאחרה, כי גאולת הנשמות היא לאחר גאולת הגופים, כי גלותן היה בתחלה וגלות הגופים באחרונה והם נגאלין קודם. כך קבלו בעלי העבודה והוא סוד מסתרי התורה. וגאולת הנשמות שנדחו צורך

גבוה ... ולפי שהוצרכו לשאול בברכה זו על גאולת הנשמות כללו בה גם גאולת הגופים, והוא אמרם וקבצנו יחד. ויען כי אין גלות אחר אלו הגאולות אמרו תקע בשופר גדול לחרותנו, כי הוא השופר המוציא עבדים לחרות יובל היא שנת החמשים שנה, וגם יש רמז באמרם וקבצנו יחד על גאולת השכינה ואם כן הרי זה צורך גבוה גם כן

5. *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* (Koretz, 1780), fol. 166a

וזה"ש 'בכה תבכה בלילה', ר"ל בכיה כפולה בגלות הדומה ללילה, והם ב' מיני גלות א' גלות הגשמי מן האומות, ב' גלות היצה"ר הרוחני שהנשמה בגלות אצל היצה"ר, כמו ששמעתי ממורי 'קרבה אל נפשי גאלה' וכו' (תהלים סט:ט), וזה נמשך מזה שנטרד משניהם. ולכך בכיה כפולה בלילה, הגלות גרם שנטרד מעזה"ז, שלא יהיו פנוים לעשות הכנה לעולם הבא, ונטרדו מעזה"ב ג"כ.

6. *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, fol. 198a

עוד יש לבאר למה תוקעין ומריעין כשהן יושבין וכו'. ונבאר אשרי העם יודעי תרועה וכו' (תהלים פט:טז). והוא דקשה, וכי לא ידע השטן שהוא מנהג ישראל כך, ולמה מתערבב. אך הענין כמו שמתערבב בגאולה כללית דיתקעו בשופר גדול, כך מתערבב בגאולה פרטית, כמ"ש קרבה אל נפשי גאלה (תהלים סט:ט). וכמו ששמעתי בשם מורי שעל זה יתפלל כל חסיד לגאול נפשו מיצה"ר, בפרט בר"ה ויה"כ וכו', ודפח"ח. ולולי דמסתפינא הייתי אומר מה שכ' בכתבי האר"י זלה"ה שע"י קול שופר דעה"ז התחתון יתעורר קול שופר העליון דעה"ב וכו' יעו"ש. ור"ל שע"י קול שופר ומוסר, לעוררו לאדם התחתון ע"י קול שופר דעה"ז מהשינה, גורם לקול שופר העליון, לעורר אדם העליון מהשינה.

7. *Sefer Tesbu'ot Hen* (Brooklyn, 1982), p. 18

כמו שאמר הבעש"ט ז"ל בענין 'קרבה אל נפשי, גאלה' שהיא תפלה על גאולה פרטיות של הנפש שלו מגלות היצר הרע, וכשיגאל כל אחד גאולה פרטיות, אז יהיה אחר כך גאולה כלליות, ויבא משיח בב"א [במהרה בימינו אמן], וידעו אותו מקטנם ועד גדולם' לעשות הכל לשמו יתברך בלבדו."

8. *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, fol. 35d

כי להעלות המחשבות זרות הוא דרך ג' קוין, וצריך לתת לב על כל מחשבה זרה מאיזה קו היא להעלותה בשרשה, וג' קוין אלו נק' אבות כנודע. והנה כי הקליפה נקרא קללה שהיא המחשבה זרה, והיא הגלות השכינה בתוך עמקי הקליפות, וזה"ש קרבה אל נפשי גאלה (תהלים סט:ט). ר"ל להעלות חלקי הנפש, שהיא נצוצי השכינה, מתוך הקליפה אל הקדושה נקרא גאולה, וכאשר שמעתי ממורי שצריך להתפלל על גלות נפשו ורוחו ונשמתו שאצל יצר הרע וכו' ודפח"ח.